SEPT.
1965

MIKE SHAYNE

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

50c
PDC

THE 100th ISSUE

A Complete Short Novel

FOR LOVE OR MURDER

featuring

MIKE SHAYNE

The toughest Private Eye in the business

by

BRETT HALLIDAY

24 ISSUES FOR ONLY $8

For a Two Year Subscription To

MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE

WE TAKE CONSIDERABLE pride in the variety and range of *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine's* contents. Our aim has been to bring you, every month, the work of both outstandingly gifted, nationally famous writers, and truly brilliant newcomers. And, of course, there's always a brand new and especially written Mike Shayne story in every issue. So, subscribe NOW. The subscription price is $6.00 per year for 12 issues—$12.00 for two years for 24 issues. But—by filling in the conveniently placed coupon below you will receive a two year subscription—24 issues—for only $8.00; a saving of $4.00. Add $1.00 for foreign postage.

WE DECIDED ON this unusual bargain subscription offer because so many readers keep telling us it's difficult to locate their favorite magazine on the present over-crowded newsstands. Subscribe immediately—and you won't have to go searching for Mike Shayne. He'll come to you 24 consecutive months with a new complete, dramatically suspenseful adventure.

REMEMBER: More than 35,000,000 copies of the amazing redhead's paperback books have been sold to date. And the Mike Shayne stories you read in our magazine appear there first, and in many instances are never reprinted in paperbacks or in any other form. You *may* miss some of Mike's most interesting capers altogether if you don't read *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine.*

SUBSCRIBE NOW . . . RE-SUBSCRIBE NOW . . . for the biggest bargain of your crime-reading life. Two years—24 issues—yours for only $8.00. Remit additional dollar ($1.00) for Canada, Mexico, Pan American countries and all foreign countries.

RENOWN PUBLICATIONS, INC.
160 West 46th Street, New York, New York. 10036

Kindly enter my subscription to **MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE** for two years (24 issues) @ $8.00. Add $1.00 for foreign postage.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY, STATE, ZIP NO. .....

Please print SEPT. 185

MIKE SHAYNE
MYSTERY MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER, 1965 Vol. 17, No. 4

NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL

FOR LOVE OR MURDER

by BRETT HALLIDAY

To celebrate our 100th anniversary the redhead traps a killer in a highly spotlighted, master-of-ceremonies role. In this brand new, novel-length adventure the suspects are almost as numerous as autumn leaves and the murder trail has a way of doubling back on itself in a forest of no return—for anyone less adroit than Shayne.

. . . . . 2 to 64 and 127 to 144

LEO MARGULIES
Publisher

CYLVIA KLEINMAN
Editorial Director

FRANK B. LONG
Associate Editor

EXCITING NEW NOVELET

PROTOCOL FOR A CROOK
PETER KENNEDY 86

ALL NEW SHORT STORIES

MR. WONG HAS DOUBTS
DAN ROSS 65

COPS TAKE CHANCES
NORMAN HUNT 71

DREAD THE LIGHT
ARNOLD ENGLISH 76

A MATTER OF GUILT
T. C. McCLARY 81

THE STRANGE CASE OF PEDDLER PHELPS
JOSEPH PAYNE BRENNEN 110

THE DEATH OF A FRAUD
FLETCHER FLORA 116

MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE, Vol. 17, No. 4. September, 1965. Published monthly by RENOWN PUBLICATIONS, INC. 160 W. 46th St., N. Y., N. Y. 10036. Subscriptions, 12 issues $6.00; 24 issues $12.00; single copies 50¢. Second-class postage paid at New York, N. Y. and at additional mailing offices. Places and characters in this magazine are wholly fictitious.

© 1965, by RENOWN PUBLICATION, INC. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America.

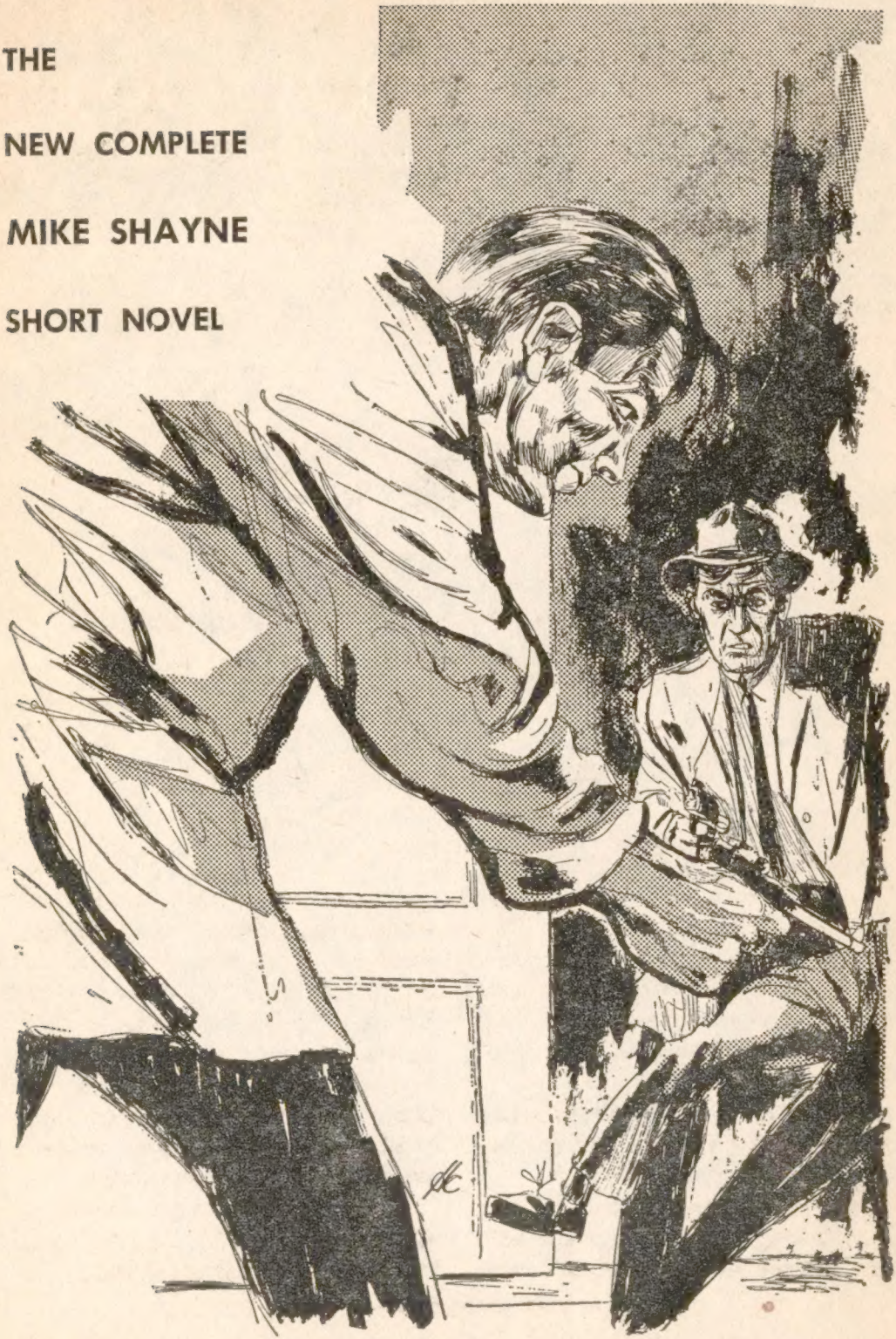
Postmaster—return 3579 to 160 W. 46th St., New York, New York, 10036.

THE

NEW COMPLETE

MIKE SHAYNE

SHORT NOVEL



Most anniversaries are memorable events and that is especially true in the magazine field, for the appearance on the newsstands of a monthly periodical one hundred times can hardly fail to become a festive occasion as well as a milestone. And just to make sure that the punch bowl remains brimming, the festivities a continuous delight, Mike Shayne has become our master of ceremonies in a novel-length contribution to your reading-pleasure enjoyment!

FOR LOVE OR MURDER

The killer's motives were complex. So Shayne had to pull out all of the stops.

by BRETT HALLIDAY

THERE WERE TIMES when Mike Shayne felt old and tired. This was one of those times. The polite, silver-haired gentleman who faced him now across his desk in the sunny private office had no right to be involved in murder.

"My name is Angus Morgan, Mr. Shayne, and I want you to investigate a murder."

Angus Morgan was a tall, erect man in his late fifties or early sixties. Immaculately dressed, Morgan stood waiting for Shayne to react. Shayne studied him. Morgan wore an expensive grey tropical suit, a fine shirt of blue and white British striping, and a silk tie that must have cost twenty-five dollars. The tall man was tanned, and his face, hands and silver-grey hair looked as if he had just stepped from some elegant barber shop.

Shayne sighed and waved a massive hand. "Sit down, Mr. Morgan," the detective said.

© 1965, by Brett Halliday

"Thank you, sir," Morgan said. "I think this will explain the matter."

Angus Morgan sat down and reached into his inside coat pocket. He brought out a small clipping and placed it before Shayne. It was from Tim Rourke's paper, *The Miami Daily News,* was five days old and from an inside page. Shayne read it slowly.

A man named Manny Corbett had been arrested for the murder of one Roxie Van Allen, actress. Corbett, who lived at an unsavory address in one of the cheaper sections of Miami, had a long police record, was known to associate with various criminals, and had been the Van Allen woman's lover. Corbett denied the charge. The police were looking for a man with the initials *E.T.* who had known the dead woman, and who might have material information in the case. Shayne put down the clipping and began to tug on his left earlobe.

From the sound of it, a particularly grubby murder case. *Actress* was newspaper parlance for a woman involved in any kind of show-business, usually anything except real acting. A real actress would have been called a 'well-known actress.' The late Roxie Van Allen could have been anything from an usher to a stripper. Corbett sounded like a cheap hoodlum. And Angus Morgan did not look like a man who could be connected to such an obviously cheap murder.

"You know this Manny Corbett, Mr. Morgan?" Shayne said.

"Never heard of the man in my life," Morgan said. "At least, not until my daughter showed me that clipping this morning."

"This morning?" Shayne said. "The date is five days ago."

"It's not an item we would normally notice, Mr. Shayne," Morgan said. "She happened to be looking for a movie review and saw it."

"What is your interest in Corbett, or is it the Van Allen woman?" Shayne asked.

"None at all in either of them," Morgan said. "My interest is in my son-in-law. You see, he has disappeared."

Shayne understood. "And your son-in-law has the initials, *E.T.*?"

Morgan nodded. "Emil Tozere, Hungarian extraction."

"How long has he been missing?"

"A week exactly."

"And you think he may be involved in this murder? Why?"

Morgan frowned. "He may have known the Van Allen woman."

"May have?" Shayne said. "You don't know?"

The silver-haired man nodded. "I see I better start at the beginning. I do not like my son-in-law, Mr. Shayne, but I also do not interfere in my daughters' lives. Since their mother died I have let

them stand on their own feet. They have their own money, from their mother. They may be a bit spoiled, but they do have minds of their own. The result is that I really know little about my son-in-law's activities.

"But about a year ago my company had occasion to give a rather large party for some important visitors and we hired a Miss Van Allen as an entertainer. I believe the term used was 'exotic dancer'. Such things are sometimes necessary in business, although I am not in favor of them myself."

"You mean she was a stripper," Shayne said. "Just what is your business?"

"I own an electronics company, Morgan Diode and Valve. We make small, special, and highly expensive electronic parts."

Shayne frowned, and made a deprecatory gesture. "So all you have is that your son-in-law has gone somewhere, and he might have known Roxie Van Allen, and the police are looking for a man with the initials *E.T.* It's pretty thin, Morgan."

"But a great deal to be simply coincidence," Morgan said.

"A week isn't long to be missing," Shayne said. "Hasn't Tozere gone on trips before?"

"Often, Mr. Shayne. Very often as a matter of fact," Morgan said. "My son-in-law is not a very good husband. He is often away at night, on trips, at meetings and all of that. But he is a very careful husband; he always explains what he is doing, and he always calls regularly to my daughter when he's away. This time he left the house, without baggage, and has not been heard from since."

"All right, but isn't this for the police? They are looking for the man with the initials. I can give you a clear road to—"

Morgan stopped him with a wave of the hand. "This is an unsavory murder, Mr. Shayne. All I have is a vague connection and some initials. I won't involve my daughter unless I'm convinced Emil is really mixed up in this. What if it turned out to be nothing at all? The newspapers would have had a field day with my daughter and my whole family before we knew for sure."

"You want me to find out whether there is any basis for your concern. Is that it?"

"Exactly, Mr. Shayne. Quietly and discreetly."

"And if there is a connection?"

"You, and I will go promptly to the police," Morgan said.

"No matter how directly your son-in-law may be involved?"

Morgan became grim. "I said I do not like Emil, Mr. Shayne. My daughter married him against my judgment. For my part I would not care if he vanished from the face of the earth!"

Shayne swiveled in his chair and studied the tall, silver-haired man.

He liked Angus Morgan. And yet there was something odd about the story of the missing son-in-law. Angus Morgan did not look like a man who would consult a private detective.

"What you're saying then," Shayne said, "is that you don't like Tozere, you don't care if he's gone for good. You think he might be involved in a grubby murder—and yet you want me to find him?"

"Find him?" Morgan said. "Yes, if you can. Perhaps I am old-fashioned, Mr. Shayne, but I would rather my daughter realized what kind of man he is and broke with him on her own. I want to know where he is, why he vanished, and what his connection was to the Van Allen woman—if there was a connection. I don't care if he returns or not, but I want my daughter to see him for what he is.

"In addition, Mr. Shayne, I am not averse to helping an innocent man, even if I don't know him. I suppose it is possible that this Corbett is innocent as he claims, and Emil knows some facts that would clear him."

"And you wouldn't mind it if I found that Tozere was the killer, eh?" Shayne said bluntly.

"I won't deny that," Morgan said simply. "The man has hurt my daughter very much with his careless ways. I would not shed a tear if he were guilty of murder!"

"You really don't like him," Shayne said drily. "All right, you want me to investigate Tozere's possible connection to the murder of Roxie Van Allen, and his disappearance. And you want it done without involving you or your daughter."

"If you can," Morgan said. "Can you?"

Shayne nodded. "Yes. I'm not required to name my clients. I can tell Will Gentry and the police that I want to help Corbett. They probably won't believe me, but they'll have to accept the story."

"Excellent, Mr. Shayne. I imagine I must give you some payment in advance?"

"You can arrange that with my secretary," Shayne said. "What I need are some more details about Tozere. What did he do for a living? What other reasons could he have for taking a run out? What were his habits? All the information you can give me, the more detailed the better."

"I'm afraid I know little about Emil's habits, Mr. Shayne. As for his work, he is an electronics engineer, but he did not work for me. I would not have considered employing him. He worked for many firms, and for no one. He is what I think you would be justified in calling a smooth-talking 'promoter' type. He is always working on some get-rich-quick deal. That was the kind of thing that kept him away on trips so often. At least, that was what he wanted my daughter to think."

"But you don't think so?" Shayne asked.

"No. Emil made very little tangible money. In the main my daughter supported him, as far as I could see. His trips had some other cause, I think."

"Women?" Shayne said.

"Perhaps, but I can't say. Emil was a careful man."

"What else?" Shayne asked.

"I'm afraid I can't help much more. Why not come to the house and talk to my daughter? I will tell her about all this, and that you want to talk to her."

"All right," Shayne said, "I'll want to look over his things anyway. You can tell a lot by what a man leaves behind."

"It's settled then," Angus Morgan said as he stood up. "I'll instruct my staff to give you every assistance."

After the tall man had gone, Shayne read the clipping again. A very sordid killing, and there had to be thousands of men with the initials *E.T.* in Miami—but not who could be involved with the late Roxie Van Allen. Will Gentry was looking for a man with the initials *E.T.*, and the Miami Chief of Police had a better-than-average record for avoiding mistakes. Which did not make it look very good for the man named Corbett.

Shayne was about to put the clipping away, when he stopped. Something Angus Morgan had said suddenly seemed odd. There

was a contradiction somewhere in Morgan's story. Shayne tugged on his left earlobe, but he could not place what it was. All he had was a sudden feeling of having missed something he should have questioned. It was the clipping which had made him think of it.

Shayne held the clipping and stared at it. But whatever had bothered him would not come clear. He put the clipping into his pocket. It was his experience that when something would not come to mind after a minute or two of intense concentration it was best to forget it. Later it would cease to elude him at some unexpected moment. Now he wanted to talk to Corbett's lawyer, if the small-time hood had a lawyer. He flipped his intercome switch and told Lucy Hamilton to find out who was representing Manny Corbett.

II

IT WAS LESS than an hour later that Lucy Hamilton announced Cosmo Arcaro. Shayne was prepared, but when he had first learned that Arcaro was Manny Corbett's lawyer it had made him sit up and take notice. Cosmo Arcaro was no small-time lawyer. And the crooks Arcaro defended were not small-time crooks. There were many, including Chief Gentry, who were sure that Arcaro was the secret, number-one legal adviser of the Miami branch of the syndicate, the so-called Cosa Nostra. But on the surface Arcaro was clean and pure.

Now Shayne waved him to a chair in his office. Arcaro sat down, opened his briefcase, and removed a thin folder which he laid on Shayne's desk. Then the swarthy compact little man looked at Shayne.

"What's on your mind, Shayne?"

"Glad you could come, Counsellor," Shayne said.

The redhead continued to study Arcaro. A very good lawyer. On the surface a solid middle-class clientele and something of a do-gooder. Underneath there were some questions. Too many accused racketeers and big-time criminals had gone free with Arcaro's help. Which made Shayne wonder about Manny Corbett and a very small-time murder. It was not Arcaro's kind of case under any circumstances.

"Your call surprised me somewhat," Arcaro said casually.

"I'll bet it did," Shayne said bluntly. "How come an important man like you is handling a small-timer like Corbett?"

Arcaro rubbed his nose. "You know Manny Corbett?"

"Never met him," Shayne said.

"Roxie Van Allen then?" Arcaro asked.

"No," Shayne said.

Arcaro smiled. Shayne was sure he detected the signs of definite relief in the face of the swarthy lawyer. Arcaro became brisk as he opened the file.

"I assume then," Arcaro said, "that your interest in this matter is for some third party, right?"

"Maybe," Shayne said.

"Manny Corbett claims that some third party, specifically a man with the initials *E.T.*, is the probable killer of the deceased Miss Van Allen," Arcaro went on smoothly, his voice almost purring like some stalking cat. "I wonder if your client has those initials?"

"No," Shayne said, truthfully if not exactly honestly.

"I see. Well, I assume you know enough not to protect a material witness," Arcaro said. "Now just what do you want to know from me?"

"How come you are defending Corbett?"

"He has friends," Arcaro said.

"Okay. What's the specific charge?"

"Murder One, but the Prosecutor will settle for Second Degree. I might be able to get Manslaughter One from a good jury."

"Then you think he's guilty?" Shayne snapped.

Arcaro shrugged. "I don't think about innocent or guilty, Shayne. I deal in realities. The way it reads I'd plead him guilty to Manslaughter One. Gentry's got a good case."

"What does Corbett say?"

"He says innocent all the way. But coming from Corbett—" Arcaro shrugged.

"He's got a swell lawyer," Shayne said acidly.

Arcaro reached into his file and pulled out some papers. He handed Shayne a photograph. It was a picture of a small, skinny man in a bathing suit standing beside a tall, blonde woman. The woman, dressed in a light, summer dress, was more than beautiful.

"Corbett and Roxie Van Allen?" Shayne asked.

Arcaro nodded. "Corbett had been, well, 'associated' with the Van Allen woman for about three years."

"Keeping house?" Shayne asked.

"No, separate apartments. Roxie shared with another girl. She was a third-rate singer and stripper, a B-Girl when she needed money which seems to have been most of the time. Corbett admits she was not at home a great deal of the time. She worked around the city and the Beach in a lot of small clubs. I have a list if you're interested."

"What about Corbett?"

Arcaro studied his papers. "Ten arrests, two convictions for bunco schemes. All the arrests were for bunco or narcotics peddling except one, and that was for assault. When Corbett gets drunk, he can be damned violent. But he was only arrested once for almost killing a man. Still, he has a record of sporadic violence."

Shayne nodded. That would go badly for Corbett. Gentry would not miss that part of his record. A con-man and petty racketeer given to sporadic violence when drunk—the ideal candidate for a sudden killing of his girl-friend.

"Get to the murder," Shayne said.

Arcaro continued to read. "A week ago yesterday Roxie was found floating in Biscayne Bay. She had drowned. Medical Examiner says she was alive when she went into the bay, but probably unconscious. There was a bruise on her forehead, no other marks on the body. The ME admits she could have hit her head while diving; she was wearing a bathing suit.

"The police did a very routine investigation to find out if anyone had seen her go into the bay. No

one had. Corbett identified her body. That seemed to close it for a couple of days—accidental death. Then for some reason he hasn't told me, Gentry reopened the case. He got a warrant and searched Corbett's apartment.

"The police found an earring that was a mate to one Roxie was wearing when she was found. Corbett didn't know how the earring got into his apartment. He had no alibi and was the last to see Roxie alive as far as we know. Gentry arrested him last Thursday."

Shayne tugged slowly on his left earlobe. "Gentry says it was no accident. Why?"

"I don't know," Arcaro said, "but I think Corbett does."

"Roxie was wearing earrings to go swimming?" Shayne asked.

"It was a very small earring. Roxie had pierced ears, and the earrings were those small pearl things. One was missing from the body. It had been ripped out, the ear torn."

"Corbett has no alibi?" Mike Shayne asked.

"He says after he left Roxie early that night he just went home and got drunk," Arcaro said. "Time of death was near midnight."

Shayne stared. "Midnight? And Corbett had an earring torn from her ear? And he has no decent alibi?"

"That's it," Arcaro said.

"No one saw her go into the bay?"

"No one knows where it happened yet," Arcaro said.

"And Corbett doesn't claim it was a swimming accident?"

"No."

"What does Corbett say?"

"He says she was killed by another man, a new boy-friend. He claims she had been going very steady with another man for about a year. The problem is that Corbett can't tell us the mystery man's name, what he looks like, where he can be found, or anything. There is no evidence that such a man exists."

Shayne began to swear softly. "So it comes down to Roxie taking a midnight swim with some unknown man who killed her and framed Corbett with the earring—or Manny Corbett."

"That's the size of it."

"What about this man with the initials *E.T.*?"

"Corbett says he could be her new lover," Arcaro said. "Only Corbett can't even swear to *that*. Frankly, Shayne, I don't know if Manny Corbett killed Roxie or not, but Gentry has a case, right? That earring was *torn* from her ear, and Corbett had it."

Shayne was thoughtful. "A very stupid thing to keep, Arcaro, wouldn't you say? And who can prove when it was torn out? Maybe they had a fight and Roxie walked away alive. Then she took a swim and knocked her head on a rock and drowned. That's just as

good an explanation. It's a better explanation as far as the earring goes. A man might keep an earring if he had no reason to think it would involve him in murder."

Arcaro was serious. "If you can come up with anything, Shayne, I'd be grateful. I don't know who hired you, but you can count on me if you want to help Manny out of this."

"I'm not in this to help Manny one way or the other," Shayne said grimly, "but let my secretary run your reports through our copying machine and I'll see what I can do."

"Anything I can do," Arcaro said. "Manny needs help."

The swarthy lawyer left. Shayne sat and looked at the door that had closed behind Arcaro. There was something about the lawyer he did not like. He had the feeling that Arcaro did not really care much whether Corbett got off or not, and had some other reason for being on the case.

Shayne wanted to talk to Corbett, and to Gentry. He wanted to find out why everyone was so sure Roxie Van Allen had not died by accident. On the surface it looked very much like a typical drowning accident. An accident would have been a better defense for Corbett than some unknown mystery lover.

Shayne looked at his watch. It was past noon now. They would be expecting him at the Morgan house. Corbett and Gentry would keep. The missing Emil Tozere might not keep at all.

III

THE MORGAN HOUSE was large and hidden from the highway by a high stone wall. Mike Shayne turned into the driveway, passed a gatekeeper's cottage, and drove up the long and winding driveway between palms and live oaks festooned with Spanish Moss. After a quarter of a mile he came in sight of the house itself.

The big house was surrounded by a magnificent lawn. In a pseudo-Tudor style, its two distinct wings were connected in the center by a long section lower than the wings. The stone walls of the house were hidden by ivy and thick bushes. The servants' quarters were in a smaller house to the rear. A four-car garage was half visible to the right of the dwelling.

Shayne studied the place as he drove up. A rich house. A big, solid house. From Angus Morgan's description of Emil Tozere, the missing son-in-law was a man who knew an opportunity, and from the look of this house this was a good thing for Tozere. If Tozere were really missing, the son-in-law would have to have a damned good reason.

There was a sudden flash of light, dazzling, and then gone. Reflected sunlight, and Shayne's

trained eye caught the quick movement of a window. The windows were all casement style, and one had just been moved. A window on the second floor in the right wing. Someone was watching Shayne drive up.

The detective did not look at the window, but parked his car in front of the colonnaded center doorway and stepped out. A young, good-looking man opened the door to his ring. Despite his youth, the man was dressed as a butler. Shayne gave his name. The young manservant nodded.

"Mrs. Tozere is expecting you, Mr. Shayne. Come in."

The young man conducted Shayne into an enormous living room that seemed to occupy the entire center section of the big house. The butler left to inform Mrs. Tozere of Shayne's arrival. Shayne looked around him. It was an elegant room, with the taste and conservative luxury he would have expected from Angus Morgan.

A small noise behind Shayne broke the trend of his thoughts. He turned to see a young woman standing just inside the doorway. She was watching him, and as he turned her alert eyes smiled. When she smiled she was distinctly on the pretty side.

"You're Mike Shayne," the young woman said. "I watched your TV show until it went off. Why did it go off?"

"Probably bored people," Shayne said. "It bored me."

"You don't look as if you would bore anyone," the young woman said.

Shayne smiled and cocked a ragged red eyebrow at the girl. There was more than a hint of flirtation in her voice and in her wide blue eyes. She had a way of moving her head that made her dark hair toss as if in a wind.

"You must be the other daughter, the unmarried one," Shayne said.

"Is that a compliment, Mr. Shayne?"

"A description," Shayne said.

The girl laughed. Her laugh was high and clear. The tilt of her chin was arrogant. Her long, dark hair looked as if it were brushed hours on end. Yet her clothes were distinctly on the sloppy side, even dirty. Slim slacks, stained and wrinkled, and a green blouse half out of her slacks and open too far at the throat.

Shayne guessed her age at about twenty-three. A small woman with thin arms, but a good figure otherwise. She was no beauty, but she was attractive. There was a liveliness about her. Now she suddenly stopped laughing. She looked at Shayne and suddenly bristled, her whole face changing to severe annoyance.

"Anything wrong with me? Or can't you tell until you've studied the X-rays?"

"You'll do," Shayne said drily.

"I'll do! Oh I will, will I?! Well now you just—"

The young butler returned to the room.

The girl whirled on him. "What do you want!?"

"Mrs. Tozere will be down in a moment," he said to Shayne. The young man ignored the angry girl.

The girl scowled, snapped, "Get us some drinks! Mr. Shayne drinks cognac, water on the side. You know what I drink, don't you, Donald? And bring the good cognac, Daddy's best."

"Yes, Miss Alida."

The young man left with an expression of misgiving on his handsome face. Shayne made a shrewd guess that it was because of the order for the 'good' cognac. Angus Morgan's good cognac would be very good indeed, and Morgan undoubtedly doled it out sparingly.

"Butlers infuriate me," the girl, Alida Morgan, said. "I wish I had been born poor and hardworking."

"Only a rich woman would wish that," Shayne said drily. "Tell me about your brother-in-law. Is he poor and hardworking?"

"Emil? He's poor all right, but I don't know about the hardworking part."

"I understand he's away on business a great deal."

"So he tells us. He's a very busy man, our Emil. Such a big, strong, smart, very busy man!"

Alida Morgan's laugh was

quick and sarcastic. Shayne watched her. Apparently Alida Morgan had not liked her brother-in-law much.

"What's your theory about where Tozere, is?" Shayne asked.

Alida laughed again. "Take your pick—women, shady business, debts, gambling, who knows what else?"

"You think he's in some kind of trouble then?"

"Bad trouble. Nothing else would make Emil leave this soft life he's got here," Alida Morgan said. "He just walked out last Tuesday morning, got into his car, and drove off. The end, gone, vanished into limbo."

"He took his car? Do you have the license number?" Shayne asked.

"Donald can give you that, if he ever comes back with our drinks."

Shayne grinned. "I expect he's asking your father if I can have that good cognac."

"I'll have his skin if he is! Damn him!" Alida cried, and suddenly smiled again. "There I go. I'm a bitch, what can you do?"

"Learn not to be," Shayne said.

The blue eyes of the young girl seemed to burn through Shayne as she stared at him. Her blue eyes widened, sparkled, and her long, dark hair tossed as she moved her head.

"Will you teach me?" she said. "I think I'd like you to teach me not to be a rich bitch. Yes, I'd like that. I think you really could teach me to—"

Alida Morgan stopped. Her blue eyes that had been staring at Shayne now glazed over, turned flat and neutral. She was looking at something over Shayne's right shoulder. For a long second her eyes hardened, and then she smiled, began to giggle.

"The wronged woman," Alida said, the sarcasm back in her voice.

Shayne turned to look. Another woman had come into the giant living room. She was tall and blonde, her curves as smooth as the pale green silk that covered them. This woman was both beautiful and a *woman,* although she could not have been more than four or five years older than Alida Morgan.

"I doubt if anyone could teach you anything, Alida," the blonde said.

She wore her hair pulled severely back and tied with a green ribbon at the nape of her neck. Her face was a delicate oval, and her eyes were almost green. For the first time Shayne really began to think that something had happened to Emil Tozere. No man would leave this woman except for an excellent reason.

"Mrs Tozere?" the redhead asked.

"Yes, and you are Mr. Shayne?"

Shayne nodded, his eyes still looking at the tall blonde. The contrast between the sisters was striking. Alida Morgan was a good four inches shorter than Mrs. Tozere, and the age difference seemed much greater than Shayne thought it was. The older sister was dressed impeccably, and her manner was soft and almost regal.

Alida sensed Shayne's thoughts. "Anne takes after father," she said. "I take after poor little dead mother. Father and Anne have the class in the family. Mother and I come from the peasants."

The older sister, Anne Tozere, ignored Alida. She smiled softly at Shayne. It was a smile that might not have launched a thousand ships, but it would have done pretty good with the sailors.

"Father really shouldn't have bothered you, Mr. Shayne," Anne Tozere said. "I'm sure Emil has simply gone on one of his trips."

"I understood he always kept in touch with you on his trips?" Shayne said bluntly.

"Well, not necessarily if—" Anne Tozere began.

"Always!" Alida Morgan said sharply. "He never failed to call Anne from wherever he was. He wouldn't lose touch with dear Anne and all the hard cash!"

"Alida!" Anne Tozere cried.

The girl snorted. "Well, it's true! The way you let him get away with murder! Business trips hell! Women, that's what his business was, and you knew it! I don't think you cared a damn. You've got your precious Paul!"

"That's about enough out of you!" Anne Tozere snapped.

Alida laughed. "Really? Big sister commands again? Well, bull! You hear? And I hope he did kill that stupid woman! I hope he did!"

The two sisters stood in the big living room and glared at each other. Anne Tozere had lost some of her regal manner, and the dark Alida's face was filled with its sneering sarcasm. Shayne looked from one to the other, but his mind was on Emil Tozere and the late Roxie Van Allen.

"Did your husband know Roxie Van Allen, Mrs. Tozere?" Shayne asked directly.

"Not as far as I know, Mr. Shayne. If he did, I had no indication of it," Anne Tozere said.

"What about it?" Shayne asked Alida Morgan.

The younger girl shrugged. "I couldn't prove it, Shayne, but Emil was seeing someone, I just know it. All those trips and no business done. Ask Anne if he ever brought home a dollar. As her about all the late nights!"

Anne Tozere sighed. "Emil was not a good businessman, and he did not like staying home. What is the point in holding down a man who wants to be free, Mr. Shayne?"

"Very noble," Alida sneered, "but she wouldn't kick him out, not her! She just let him walk all over her."

"When you grow up you'll find there is more to marriage than you think," Anne Tozere said to her sister.

Shayne rubbed his chin. He watched the tall blonde Anne. He was getting a picture of a rocky marriage and a noble, self-sacrificing wife. Perhaps the noble wife had reached the end of her rope a week ago.

"Did you know Roxie Van Allen, Mrs. Tozere?" Shayne asked.

"No, Mr. Shayne, I did not. I don't go to the kind of place where she worked, and I don't know women like her."

Shayne turned to the younger woman. "What about you, Alida?"

Alida's blue eyes narrowed, darkened, for an instant as she said, "I never knew she existed. Never!"

The voice came this time from behind Shayne again. A man's voice, deep and sharp.

"That's a lie! We all knew!"

Shayne whirled to stare at the man who had just come into the living room and was staring at Alida Morgan with an accusing look in his eyes.

IV

THE MAN WAS neither handsome nor ugly. An average man of average height, about forty years old, who looked like a minor executive in some small business.

"We all knew about her," the man said. "Perhaps we did not know her name or just what she looked like, but we knew she existed."

"Please, Paul," Anne Tozere said to the newcomer.

"Paul what?" Shayne snapped as he studied the man.

"Paul Hening, if it's any business of yours. Just who the devil are you?"

"Mr. Shayne is a detective father hired to find Emil," Anne Tozere said. "Emil could be in trouble, Paul."

"Emil?" Paul Hening said. "No such luck. Emil could con his way out of hell."

Hening had crossed the room to stand beside Anne Tozere. Now the tall blonde put her hand on Hening's arm and smiled sadly at him. The way the woman touched Hening was a strange mixture of old-friend, solicitude and something more intimate.

Shayne remembered Alida Morgan mentioning that her sister had someone named Paul to help her forget Emil Tozere. He turned his attention to the man.

"Just what do you mean you all knew Roxie Van Allen existed, Hening?" Shayne said.

"You just had to know Emil to know that there was a Roxie Van Allen somewhere," Hening said. "From what I read she was just the type for him—cheap, vulgar, and brassy!"

"In other words," Shayne said, "you don't know if he knew Roxie Van Allen or not. You just thought that he was the type of man to have a sweetheart stashed away somewhere."

"I thought," Hening said, "and I saw! I followed Emil a few times."

"Paul! How could you!" Anne Tozere cried.

"Damn it, Anne," Hening exploded, "I knew he was no good! But you wouldn't listen—not to me, not to your father, and not to Alida! Even she told you to break with him! I thought if I could really catch him cheating it might open your eyes and make you consider a divorce."

"Did you catch him?" Shayne snapped.

"Yes and no," Hening said. "I followed him a couple of times when he met men and it could have been business, and I lost him a few times. Recently I followed

him twice to the same place—the San Marcos Motel just north of the city. I was sure he was going to meet a woman, but I never saw her."

"Paul, you never told me that!" Anne Tozere said.

"I wanted to be sure," Hening said, "and I never saw the woman."

Shayne scowled. "If there was a woman. Tozere could have been playing poker, chess or mah jong! They could have been legitimate business meetings. Anyway, Hening, just what is your interest in all this?"

The man was about to answer when Anne Tozere stopped him by touching his arm again. The beautiful blonde looked straight at Shayne, her green eyes steady and calm.

"Paul is a very close friend of the family, Mr. Shayne," Anne Tozere said. "He works for father, he knows us all for a long time, and Paul and I were engaged before Emil came along."

"When was that," Shayne said.

"About six years ago. Emil and I have been married for five years. They have not been happy years, Paul has been a great help to me."

"Help? Damn it, Anne, I want to marry you!"

The look in Hening's eyes left no doubt as to his sincerity. It was obvious to Shayne that the man was in love with Anne Tozere. He hovered over her in so protectively possessive a way that Shayne doubted that Paul Hening would have cared if Tozere never came back.

"Do you want Emil to come back, Mrs. Tozere?" Shayne said.

The tall blonde blinked her green eyes but did not look away as Shayne asked that question. She seemed to be thinking. She looked at Hening as she spoke.

"I don't know, Mr. Shayne. I'm not sure. Despite all his shortcomings, Emil never made me feel he wanted to leave me, or have me leave him. I hate the thought of divorce, even the word, and yet how much longer could we go on the way Emil ignored me."

She shook her head. "No, *ignored* is not the right word. For all his neglect, he was very attentive when he was with me. I really don't know how I feel about him now."

"Did he marry you for your money?" Shayne asked bluntly.

Anne Tozere smiled. "It's strange, but I don't think so. Oh, he needed my money, and he wanted the connection to father, but Emil is a strange man. He didn't hesitate to use father's name in the industry, but he refused to work for him. He wanted my money, of course, but I think I was far more important to him. It was me he really wanted."

"He had a hell of a way of showing it!" Paul Hening said.

Anne Tozere shook her beautiful head. "No, I don't quite mean

it that way, Paul. I mean something more complex."

The tall blonde looked at Shayne. "Emil is very attractive to women. Have you noticed that some men are like that without an obvious reason? Emil is handsome, yes. But so are many men who do not attract women as much as he, you understand? I mean, most men want a woman, but Emil wanted women, just to have them want him. I mean—"

Shayne broke in. "You mean he collected women. He liked to know they were his. He wanted to own you, whether he loved you or not."

"Yes, Mr. Shayne, I guess that's what I was trying to say. It's a kind of sickness, I think, In all modesty, I am only a prized addition to his collection."

Alida Morgan, silent since Paul Hening had come into the room, suddenly spoke up. There was a cold edge in the voice of the dark-haired younger woman as she faced her sister.

"And what is Emil to you?"

"I love him," Anne Tozere said simply.

"No matter what he does to you? The other women? This horrible Roxie woman?" Alida cried.

"I don't believe it matters, not really," Anne said.

Before Alida could speak again, the young butler returned, carrying a tray with four drinks on it. He handed out the drinks as Shayne watched him. He was very young for a butler, and not at all the right type.

Shayne mused over this as he tasted his cognac. It was very good cognac. Shayne sipped it appreciatively as he talked.

"There are a few things I have to know. Just when did he disappear? I mean what time of day?" Shayne asked Anne Tozere.

"In the morning as usual, I believe," she said. "Last Tuesday morning, and he simply never returned."

"You believe?" Shayne said. "Don't you know?"

"Of course I know, Mr. Shayne. But I did not actually see him leave, since I was in Palm Beach. I went to visit some frieds of mine, the Waltaires, last Monday night."

The coincidence of a trip to Palm Beach by the missing man's wife on the very night Roxie Van Allen had died made Shayne raise a ragged red eyebrow. Palm Beach was not that far from Miami.

"A planned trip, Mrs. Tozere?" Shayne asked.

Anne shook her head. "No, rather spur-of-the-moment. I had spent the weekend at our beach house with Emil. We had had a—well, a rather bad quarrel Sunday night. I was very depressed, so I went to visit my friends."

"So you don't know what he was wearing when he left?" Shayne said.

"I'm afraid not, but perhaps

Donald will," Anne said, "and perhaps Alida."

Shayne looked at the younger girl. "You saw Tozere that morning?"

Alida nodded. "We had breakfast together. He was wearing his grey silk suit, a white shirt with a grey and white striped tie, grey suede shoes, and no hat as usual."

"Rings, tie clip, other jewelry?" Shayne said.

"His wedding ring and wrist watch," Alida said, her brow creased as she recalled what Tozere had been wearing. "His diamond stick-pin, of course, and a small white carnation in his lapel."

"And he took nothing else with him?"

"Not that I saw," Alida Morgan said.

Shayne looked at the others. "Anything else you can tell me? Places he might go, people he might contact?"

Anne Tozere shook her head. "I'm afraid not, Mr. Shayne. We knew little of his business associates, and the only place I know he might have gone was the beach house. Donald has been there every day and Emil has not appeared."

"All right," Shayne said. "I think that's all for now. I'll let you know what I find."

"Thank you, Mr. Shayne," Anne said, "but I'm sure Emil will turn up soon."

"Bad pennies usually do," Paul Hening said.

Alida Morgan laughed. "You should know, Paul. You've been turning up here for years. Did it ever occur to you that Emil could be hurt somewhere, even dead? Just hearing you talk about how bad Emil is makes me sick!"

The dark-haired younger girl turned abruptly and stalked from the spacious living room. There was a silence after she had gone. Anne Tozere and Hening looked at each other. The tall blonde woman sighed sadly.

"She's right, of course," Anne said. "It's just that Emil has been away so often, it's hard for Paul

to realize that this time could be different.

"Maybe it's not different," Shayne said. "But we won't know until we find him. I'll do all I can."

"Thank you, Mr. Shayne. Donald will let you out," Anne Tozere said. "He has a picture of Emil to give you."

Shayne followed Donald from the living room and down the hall toward the outside door. Somewhere in the big house someone was playing a guitar. Shayne heard a woman's voice singing in the distance. He raised an eyebrow as he looked at the butler, Donald, who handed him the photo of Tozere.

"Miss Alida," Donald said. "She likes folk songs. She plays pretty good."

"Is Donald a first or last name?" Shayne asked.

"First, sir. Donald Maddern."

"You don't look like a butler."

"I'm trying to be a writer. This job pays pretty good. I get room and board, and the work isn't hard."

"Sounds just right for a writer," Shayne said. "Now what can you tell me about Tozere? Butlers see things sometimes."

Donald shook his head. "Nothing, sir. Mr. Tozere did nothing unusual around the house. He lived in the right wing, and he was away a great deal."

"Tell me about the car and the license."

Donald gave Shayne the license number of Tozere's car. "It is a Cadillac convertible."

Shayne wrote the number in his notebook. "Where were they all the day he vanished?"

"Mrs. Tozere came back from Palm Beach in the evening that day," Donald said. "Mr. Morgan was at his office as usual, and Miss Alida went out driving in her Jaguar."

"And the night before? Monday night?"

"Mr. Morgan was home, but he went out quite late. He had a telephone call and went out at once. He said the call was from Mr. Alistair Goode, some business matter.

"Mrs. Tozere went to Palm Beach that night. I don't know just when; she left from the beach house. Miss Alida went out early. I think she went to *Dino's*."

"What is *Dino's*?"

"A roadhouse south of the city," the butler said.

Shayne thanked Donald and walked out of the big house and climbed into his car. As he drove down the long and winding driveway he tugged hard on his earlobe and thought about the case. He had the feeling that it was all wrong. Anne Tozere was not sure she cared if Emil ever came back. Alida Morgan hoped he was guilty of murder and yet wondered if he was injured or in trouble. Paul Hening would be delighted if Tozere was gone for good, one way or the other as far as Shayne

could see. And Angus Morgan didn't give a damn about Emil Tozere.

Yet Shayne had been hired to find Tozere, and everyone was friendly and cooperative. But, then, had he really been hired to find Tozere? Angus Morgan himself had all but admitted that what he wanted was for Shayne to find a connection between Tozere and the dead Roxie Van Allen. That was not the same thing. A real connection between Tozere and the dead B-Girl would please Morgan and Hening, and perhaps even Anne.

They had talked a lot, but all Shayne really had to go on was some clothes, a Cadillac convertible, and the name of a motel in the Miami area. It wasn't much. He could report the clothes and the car to the police, which left him with the motel and little else. As he swung out of the long driveway and onto the main highway back to Miami, he decided that the motel had to be the first stop.

He saw the big, black car almost the instant he swung onto the highway. It was parked, waiting just outside the gate of the Morgan estate. As soon as he turned on the highway it started after him. He stepped on the gas. The black car gained on him. He could see two men in the front seat.

The black car moved up on his car rapidly—some kind of special, souped-up motor in it.

He drove as fast as he could, but the car drew alongside, its wheels inching over toward him. It came closer and closer as the two cars raced down the highway. Shayne could not really see the two men who sat with their hats low over their faces. The car was trying to run him off the road.

Shayne jammed on his brakes, fought the wheel, and rode a long skid to a halt at the side of the highway, half-expecting the car to overturn.

The black car shot on past for another fifty yards. Then it, too, skidded to a halt. Shayne unholstered his automatic and jumped out of his car to crouch in its shelter. In the big car up ahead the door opened, and then closed again.

The big black car roared away toward Miami.

Shayne holstered his automatic and stared after the black car. A warning? The two men in the black car had the almost unmistakable look of hired muscle men. And the attempt to run him off the road had all the marks of someone who did not want him at work for a time, if not permanently out of action. Someone who did not want him looking for Emil Tozere. Maybe Tozere himself.

Shayne got back into his car and drove off, his steel-grey eyes watching for the black car to have another try at him. But he did not see the car again as he drove north toward the San Marcos Motel.

V

THE SAN MARCOS was a seedy collection of isolated cabins hidden from the main highway by rows of tall palms. Its neon sign was shabby and dim as if the proprietor of the motel did not want passing tourists to see it. The main entrance for cars was clearly visible from all the cabins. Shayne could see how Hening would not have risked driving in to be close to the cabins.

Shayne parked and walked into a cabin no different from the others excepting for a sign that read *Office*. In the office there was a man behind a counter with the registration cards on it. The man was enormously fat, a squat mountain of soft flesh.

The flabby fat man mopped sweat from his florid face in the afternoon heat as he grinned now at Shayne. "What can I do you for, friend?" he asked.

Shayne winced at the ancient joke. "You the manager?"

"You got two more guesses for the cigar, friend," the fat man beamed.

"I give up. Unless you're the house comedian," Shayne said.

The fat man laughed. When the mountain of loose skin laughed everything bounced like a jellyfiish in a hurricane.

"It's all mine, Clyde, I own this beautiful establishment. You want a nice, clean, quiet room? I can recommend a good motel a mile away."

The walking mountain continued to laugh until his eyes watered. Shayne sighed. There were times when he wondered if being a detective was worth coming to terms with the pure idiocy of some of the people he had to meet. Killers and punks were bad enough, but the humorists were the worst. Only this paritcular humorist was not quite as stupid as he looked. The fat motel-owner still chuckled, but now cocked a shrewd eye at Shayne.

"You got the look of a man with questions, Clyde."

"How can you tell?"

"You got a Miami licence on that heap outside, so you ain't no tourist. You don't look eager, and you ain't got a broad out there, so you ain't one of my regular clientele."

"I've got questions," Shayne said.

"Okay," the fat man said, "shoot when ready, friend."

Shayne raised a shaggy eyebrow. "No resistance?"

"Do I look like the resisting type, Clyde?" the fat man said. "Besides, I recognize you. I read the papers, Mike Shayne."

Shayne reached into his coat pocket for the picture of Emil Tozere that Angus Morgan had given him. He handed it to the fat man over the counter. The motel-owner held the picture with one hand

while he continued to mop his face with the handkerchief. The fat man nodded.

"Yeh, I seen him," the owner said. "He used to come here a lot, maybe a year or two ago. Now he don't come so regular."

"You're sure you haven't got him mixed up with someone else?"

The fat man smiled. "I got a whiz-bang nose for faces, friend. I never forget 'em. You might say it's a hobby, remembering how they all look. This one was the smooth type—no, sweat, real casual. I remember him good. He was a real regular for a couple years."

"You know his name?" Shayne snapped.

"Who knows from names, Clyde?" the fat man said. "In my place all names are phony anyway. I had me a Mao-Tse-Tung once, and the guy was a skinny Polak. I even got a Winston Churchill about six months ago."

"I get the point," Shayne said. "What name did this man give?"

The fat man shook his head. "Nothing special. Like I said, he was a smooth type, no jokes and all business. He signed like John Smith, or Joe Green, you know?"

"You live dangerously," Shayne said. "Phony names on a register are illegal."

"Who can stop love, friend?" the fat man said.

Shayne was thinking about Emil Tozere. A man who had a wife like Anne at home, and yet came regularly to a shabby love nest like this motel. A collector of women. Smooth and casual. Shayne would never understand a man like that, and he was not sure such a man really understood himself.

"Do you think you could identify the woman he brought?" Shayne said. "I gather he brought a woman here."

The fat man laughed again. "Friend, the last time I had a single guy here was a year ago last Thursday. Once I knocked on a door and asked the guy how much longer he was gonna be using the cabin on account I had a party waiting, and damn if they wasn't really married! I almost got socked that time."

"You run a fine establishment," Shayne said. "Now what about the woman he brought. Was she a tallish blonde, and very good looking?"

"Maybe," the fat man said.

"What do you mean, maybe?"

"Friend, when this guy was coming regular he brought a lot of women. Some were blondes, and some were tall, check? Mostly the dames hid out in the car, heads down, keeping in the shadows until he signed the register and they could make a dash for the cabins. I try to get a look most of the time. But some of them moved too fast for me."

"So you can't be sure what many of the women he brought

looked like?" Shayne said. "What about the most recent? You said he doesn't come regularly anymore, but he still comes. When was the last time?"

"Let's see," the fat owner said. "Maybe two weeks ago, maybe less. And this dame I don't see at all."

"What do you mean?" Shayne asked.

"Like I don't see her at all. She ain't in his car, you know?" the fat man said. "I mean, Clyde, maybe the last four or five times the guy comes here he drives in alone. That wasn't like him, so it stuck in my memory. I never did see the dame show up, only I heard her in the cabin."

"You listen at doors all the time?" Shayne asked.

"Not most of the time, it's always the same, you know?" the fat owner said. "Only this time it was kind of different. I mean, this guy was a regular a year or so ago, and then he wasn't around so much. A couple of months ago he started showing up again. I figure he's coming back and that's good for business, check? Only he's acting different, showing up alone and meeting the dame here. And the dame's giving him a hard time.

"Twice when I went into the cabin after they left the bed wasn't even mussed up. Once I hear yelling. I don't like yelling, it hurts business, the boys get scared the cops'll come around. So I listened and when they started to yell I knocked and told them to shut up. It was the dame who did most of the yelling at the guy, and when I told her to shut up she cursed me out right through the door."

"The woman swore at you?"

"Told me to go to hell," the fat man said. "I went. The customer is always right."

"Make believe I'm a customer and show me the cabin he used last," Shayne said.

"I got a fast turnover, friend," the fat man said. "What can you find?"

"I'll look, then maybe I'll know," Shayne said.

"Suit yourself, friend," the agreeable fat man said.

The cabin he led Shayne to was set far back from the highway, hidden from the road but with a clear view of the entrance to the motel. The motel-owner left him alone, and the detective walked behind the cabin. A low fence and thick hedge separated the motel grounds from a roadhouse parking lot. An opening in the hedge showed how someone could reach the motel without ever being seen.

The ground inside the parking lot was sprinkled with heavy cinders that would leave no tire tracks. According to the fat man it had been over two weeks since Tozere had last visited the motel to meet a woman, and there was little chance that Shayne would find any clue to her identity either out-

side or inside the cabin. But he searched the ground all around the break in the hedge anyway.

He found nothing and turned to enter the cabin. Its interior was dark, the shades drawn against the afternoon sun. It was a single small room with two closets and a bathroom. The only furniture was a double bed, two arm chairs, a straight chair and writing desk, and two shabby bureaus. The bed had been made, the ashtrays dusted and filled with matchbooks, and a mop swished lightly over the exposed linoleum floor. As Shayne had suspected, they did not clean too well at the San Marcos.

Shayne opened the drawers of the two bureaus. They were empty, bare and not even lined with wrapping paper. A few dark hairpins were caught as usual in the joins between the boards at the bottoms of at least half of them. The writing desk had nothing in its single drawer beyond the usual few sheets of cheap notepaper, two envelopes, and three cheap ballpoint pens. A search of the upholstered armchairs yielded more hairpins and two blue garters from some long-departed girdle.

In the bathroom Shayne found nothing except three old razorblades and a half-used tube of men's hairdressing. Back in the main room he went to the bed. But the bed, at least, had been made, and there was nothing hidden beneath the mattress. On his

hands and knees, he scrutinized the floor beneath the bed. The floor in the dark under the bed was swept clean. Shayne searched the area carefully, and heard the soft steps too late.

Down on his hands and knees, bent to look beneath the bed, he heard the steps. Directly behind him a floorboard creaked. He half straightened up, and swore to himself. In the long, endless second after he heard the soft steps approaching, he swore at his stupidity in not searching the closets first, and realized that he had moved the wrong way. He should have flattened and dived beneath the bed. He had no second chance as the blow smashed against his exposed head.

A single heavy blow to the back of his head knocked him flat. Only stunned, the detective tried to roll, rise to his feet.

The second blow, and the third, struck the side of his skull.

The third blow was enough.

He collapsed, and the darkened room went black.

VI

MIKE SHAYNE seemed to dream. The small man was beating him with a thick, pulpy bag. The small man smashed the bag over and over against his head. He tried to dodge, escape, but the blows rained down and there was no escape. Like an angry, buzzing fly with a human face, his tormenter struck again and again, always just out of reach of Shayne's clutching hands.

Just as the torment seemed about to rise to new heights Shayne became acutely aware that the dream had vanished. He opened his eyes, blinked, lay rigid for a long second, and then jumped to his feet with his automatic in his big hand.

The cabin was empty. No longer dark. He looked around for the source of light and saw that the outside door was open. He ran out into the late afternoon sun and around the cabin. There was no one in sight. Beyond the hedge, in the parking lot of the roadhouse, a light haze of dust still floated as if a car had just left the lot in a hurry. Shayne holstered his automatic and turned back to the cabin.

Inside the cabin his grey eyes searched carefully. The door of the left-hand closet was open. That was where his attacker had hidden. Shayne swore at himself again for not checking the room. A search of the closet revealed nothing, and in the single cabin room he let his eyes rove slowly around to check what he had seen earlier.

On the writing desk one ashtray was empty now. There had been a matchbook in it. He went to the desk and looked down at it. One matchbook was gone. He opened the single drawer. There were now only two ballpoint pens in the drawer. Shayne narrowed his eyes. The missing pen had been red, he was sure of that. His attacker had taken a matchbook and a ballpoint pen.

He lighted a cigarette and stepped out into the sunlight. As he walked toward his car his mind concentrated on the instant before he had blacked out. There was the vague impression of a small man. As he had turned and taken the last two blows on the side of his head, he had had a vague glimpse of a hand, an arm clothed in some dark fabric, heavy trousers, and . . . and something that did not fit.

Sandals.

In his car the redhead smoked and pictured the sandals he had glimpsed, and the trousers. Grey trousers, and yet not quite grey. An off-grey, neither light nor really dark. Grey trousers and sandals

on bare feet. A soft hand, almost manicured, the nails shining even in the dim light of the cabin. A woman? It was possible, and yet Shayne was sure the blows had been too hard to have been delivered by a woman unless that woman were very strong.

Shayne flipped the stub of his cigarette out the car window and started his motor. He drove out of the Motel yard and turned back toward Miami proper. Man or woman, his attacker had wanted a matchbook and a ballpoint pen—things that had meant nothing to Shayne. Objects that had not seemed important enough to remember. But someone had thought they were important. Which meant that Shayne had not yet discovered their importance.

And he was now at a dead end in the trail of Emil Tozere. All he had was the missing car and the clothes Tozere had been wearing. It was time to find out if there was more to be found at the other end—at Manny Corbett's and Roxie Van Allen's end of the affair. If Tozere had not yet led him to Roxie and Corbett, maybe Corbett or the dead Roxie could lead him to Tozere.

Shayne drove fast toward the Miami jail in the angled rays of the early evening sun over the city.

MANNY CORBETT was small and skinny. The hoodlum sat facing Mike Shayne across the barricade of the visitors' room with a thin smile on his pale face. Even in his shabby prison clothes there was an aura of diminutive arrogance about the accused killer.

"The great Mike Shayne," Corbett said. "I figured you'd cop out on me and never show, shamus."

"I'm here, Corbett," Shayne said.

"Slummin', huh?" Corbett said. "I'm real lucky."

"I can walk away and let you burn to a crisp, Corbett," Shayne said harshly. "I might even enjoy it."

For an instant, Corbett seemed to wilt, the swagger and arrogance gone. A flash, a moment, and a small, skinny, very scared and naked man sat facing Shayne. Beneath the cheap swagger a frightened and exposed man sat inside Corbett's skin. His voice was low and hoarse.

"I've been a wise-guy so long I can't stop. Don't pay me no mind, Shayne. You got to help me," the accused killer said. "I know how it looks. Bad, real bad. If I was Gentry I'd throw away the key, sure. Only I ain't Gentry, and I know I didn't kill Roxie. I mean, she was my girl. I loved her. Sure, go ahead and laugh. A punk like me in love. I'd laugh myself, only it's true, and I didn't kill her."

The slender hoodlum stopped. For a moment Corbett seemed to be looking through and beyond Shayne, as if he were seeing Roxie

Van Allen alive again. Somewhere in the jail a lone man was singing. Low and blue. A flat, toneless song. It was a solitary, chilling sound in the dim visitors' room.

"Maybe you better tell me your side of it," Shayne said.

Corbett nodded, his small eyes looking again at Shayne. The unseen man continued to sing his toneless song in the distance, somewhere among the silent corridors and cells.

"We had been going together maybe three years," Corbett began. "She was some nice doll. I ain't talking about the skin and feathers only. She was a straight broad. I even wanted to marry her. Only what was a broad like her gonna do married to me? One spit ahead of the fuzz all the time, that's me. Only I didn't give up. I figured Roxie was worth dating, and pretending like it was for keeps, no matter how it might have to end."

"Even with the other men?" Shayne said.

Corbett shrugged. "Who was I to tell her what to do? So she was a B-Girl and got paying Johns. She was a good-looking chick with no talent. Her old man drank himself six feet down for the long count before she was ten. Her old lady ran off with some hustler. Roxie was earnin' her bread before she was old enough to go to high school.

"She didn't have no talent except what she was born with. So what right did I have to make noise about the Johns? She worked the saloons, okay. Only about a year ago she got herself a steady. That was different. She didn't tell me, but I could feel the scene. She wasn't the same toward me, you know? I tried to find the guy, but it was no dice. They was mighty damned careful."

"You never saw the man or knew his name?" the redhead asked.

"No," Corbett said. "Like I said, they was careful. He never came around to her place or anywhere she worked. It took me a while to catch on. Then I did six months inside, and when I come out I tried to tail her but I never could make the guy. I figure they got some hideout and when they go places it ain't the kind of places I go."

"How the hell can you be sure there was a man?" Shayne snapped.

"I got the feel, you know? Besides, she starts having real bread, plenty of money. She starts showing up with stuff: new rags, jewelry —all that. And, anyway, she told Sally-Ann she had this guy."

"Sally-Ann?"

"Her roomie, she shared her place," Corbett said. "Sally-Ann don't talk much. But she let it slip once when she was in the bag. Only she don't know the guy neither."

Shayne scowled. "No one knew the guy."

Corbett shrugged again. "Like I said, I tailed her a couple of times, only in my world you got to play it cool. Sally-Ann she played cool, no questions, and I had to make like I didn't lose my cool so easy. I knew if I lost the cool I wouldn't have no chance with Roxie, see? Anyway, I got plenty to keep busy. A guy like me starts makin' like a peeper and the cops come down on him."

Shayne tugged on his earlobe. The redhead was studying the small hoodlum. The story had the ring of truth to it, and yet who could be sure with a small-time crook like Corbett? But true or false, the story was not much good to anyone.

"So only Roxie could tell us about this phantom lover, and Roxie isn't talking much anymore. That's fine."

"I'm leveling, Shayne," Corbett said.

"It doesn't matter if it's the truth, Corbett. It's got to sound like the truth," Shayne said. "Where did you get the initials *E.T.?*"

"Roxie had this here bracelet once. I got a good look at it inside, and it had this writing: *E.T. to Roxie with love.* I found a shirt in her pad, a guy's shirt, with the initials *E.T.* kind of sewed on it."

"A monogrammed shirt?"

"Yeh. I got mad and beat on her some. She told me I didn't have no hold. I wasn't tellin' her what to do. I mean, I lost my cool that time. She didn't come around for a month."

Shayne tugged slowly, thoughtfully on his left earlobe in the silence of the jail room. Corbett's story about the man *E.T.* told him nothing. The phantom lover could be anyone, could be real or cooked up. If there was no such man, Corbett was in trouble. If there was a lover, Corbett could be in worse trouble. Jealousy was a gilt-edged motive. Corbett even admitted that he had beaten Roxie for just having a man's shirt.

"Let's get to the murder night itself, if it was murder," Shayne said. "Do you have any idea where it could have happened?"

"Nope," Corbett said. "Last I saw of Roxie was around six o' clock that night. We had a couple drinks."

"You were with her that night?"

"Yeh, for a while. She cut out on me, had a big date with some guy. She made like it was business, only I ain't so sure."

Shayne said, "She had drinks with you, so she must have gone back to her place to get her bathing suit. Could she have told this Sally-Ann where she was going?"

"I don't figure she went back to her pad," Corbett said. "That bathing suit she was wearin' wasn't her suit."

Shayne blinked. "Not her bath-

ing suit? How do you know for sure? Women don't usually borrow bathing suits."

"Roxie only had one suit, Shayne. A red bikini job."

Shayne stood up now and began to pace the silent visitors' room. "She was wearing clothes, they have to be somewhere. Do you remember what she was wearing?"

"Green dress, sort of tight. Green shoes, no stockings. I figure her bra and pants was green too, she was like that," Corbett said.

"And a borrowed bathing suit means there had to be a woman involved in this," Shayne mused. "Another woman, and out for a midnight swim. Roxie dives, hits her head, and—No, damn it, why wouldn't the other woman, a man if he was there, come in and report if it was an accident? And the borrowed bathing suit makes it almost certain she was not alone. Unless she borrowed the suit earlier and went for her midnight swim alone."

"No," Corbett said.

"All right, she didn't swim alone, but the man is married and when she hit her head and didn't come up he ran because he didn't want to be involved," Shayne said. He watched the skinny hoodlum. Corbett did not smile or show any signs of hope.

"You want an accident, Arcaro wants an accident," Corbett said, "Only Gentry knows it was murder and so do I, Shayne."

Shayne stared hard at Corbett. He was beginning to wonder if he had stumbled into an insanity killing.

"How do you know it was murder, you weren't there!" Shayne snapped. "Let Will Gentry say it was murder, unless you're in a hurry to burn."

Corbett leaned forward in the straight prison chair, and folded his thin arms across his stomach as if he had a sharp pain.

"I don't want to burn," Corbett said, his voice low in the silent and barren visitors' room, "but I ain't kidding myself. I found out it don't pay to kid yourself when I was nine years old. Roxie was murdered, Shayne. I know the same way Gentry knows."

"All right," Shayne said. "Tell me."

"Roxie couldn't swim, Shayne," Corbett said. "Not a stroke. That's why she only had one suit. She never got it wet. She hated the water. She had a—a—"

"A phobia?" Shayne said.

"Yeh, a phobia. It scared her crazy to put her foot in the water at noon. Ain't nobody could have made Roxie go into the water or even near it at midnight."

VII

THERE IT WAS. Now Shayne knew what Will Gentry had to make him sure that Roxie Van Allen had been murdered. It was not proof, but it was enough to

start Gentry looking for a killer. And it must account for the few days delay in arresting Corbett. Gentry had not known at first about Roxie's phobia. The phobia, plus the borrowed suit, made an accident all but impossible. The earring plus no alibi made Corbett the killer.

"All right, Corbett, let's talk about that earring. How do you say you got it?"

"I don't know," Corbett said.

"That earring was ripped from her ear."

"She was wearin' both earrings when she left me. I swear it."

"Then how did it get from wherever she died to your rooms?"

"It's a frame," Corbett said. "It's got to be a frame."

Shayne nodded. "All right, who would want to frame you and why?"

Corbett shrugged. "I don't know. I been tryin' to think, only there's no one who'd have anything to gain by framing me. There just ain't no one."

Shayne stopped his pacing and stood looking down at the small hoodlum. He spoke slowly. "You were the last to see her alive. You were her boy-friend and violently jealous. You say you suspected that she had a serious lover besides you. You have a record of violence. You've got an earring it's a hundred to one only the killer would have. You've no idea why anyone would want to frame you. And you

don't have an alibi. Damn it, Corbett, the jury'll never leave the box!"

Corbett looked up. "Yeh, only I didn't kill Roxie. I loved her."

Shayne was frowning heavily. Corbett was a punk, a bum, a con man and dope pusher. He would steal pennies from a three-year-old, and rob a one-legged blind man. But there was a tone in Corbett's voice that made Shayne look at him intently. It was a tone of despair, of hopeless protest. The tone of a man who knows that the one time he is telling the truth in his whole life he will not be believed.

Corbett smiled thinly. "It's funny. All my life I been cooking up alibies for deals I made, jobs I pulled. I've been guilty a hundred times over, only I always had me a good alibi cooked up. This time I'm clean and I ain't got no alibi at all. I guess if you're a crook like me, the worst thing you can

be is innocent. I mean, when you're innocent, when it's a bum rap, you don't know enough to fix up an alibi."

Shayne understood what the small hoodlum was trying to say. The law was different for a known criminal. A known crook was guilty until he could prove his innocence. Police were only human, and a known criminal caught without an alibi in a web of circumstantial evidence, or a frame-up, was in worse trouble than if he were guilty and had a prepared lie.

"You just left Roxie and went home and got drunk all alone," Shayne said. "Arcaro says that's your story."

"Yeh, that's my story."

"No one saw you come home? No one saw you or heard you in your room? You got no phone calls or visitors all night?"

"That's it," Corbett said.

"Where do you live? Some nice, quiet neighborhood where no one hears or sees anything? Where everybody minds their own business? The hell you do! You live in a cheap rooming house with walls so thin you could hear a glass hit the table ten rooms away! Where you live a cockroach couldn't cross a window sill without half the neighborhood knowing it! Damn it, Corbett, you're lying!"

"That's my story, Shayne," Corbett said.

His eyes had suddenly gone flat, a blank film over them. Shayne had seen that look before on the faces of crooks who were not going to tell anything else. The hard, blank look of the cornered criminal. The closed door. And, somehow, he knew Corbett was lying about something now.

"You've always been a lone drinker, Corbett?"

"I was feelin' bad about Roxie," Corbett said.

Shayne sat down. He faced Corbett across the bare visitor's desk, his grey eyes narrowed, his voice low and hard.

"You're covering for something or someone, Corbett. This is a murder charge and you'd better not let yourself forget it. If you've got any alibi I'd advise you to spit it out so fast your head swims."

"I was home alone, drinking," Corbett said, and the skinny man looked straight into Shayne's hard grey eyes. "It's the best I got, Shayne. I don't need more trouble. I got no alibi, but I didn't kill Roxie."

Shayne leaned forward, stared, for another long minute. Then the redhead sat back in his chair. Corbett was lying, but Corbett was also telling Shayne that the lie had nothing to do with the murder of Roxie Van Allen.

At last Mike Shayne nodded. "All right, is it a frame or just a bum rap?"

"I ain't got a clue," Corbett said.

Shayne tugged on his earlobe.

"I think it's a bum rap, all circumstantial evidence except that earring. The kind of friends you have could do a better job of a frame. They wouldn't leave so much to chance. Gentry could have written the death off as an accident if it wasn't for Roxie's phobia."

"Everyone knew she had it," Corbett said.

"Too complicated for a decent frame-up," Shayne said, "and all circumstantial. On the other hand, the earring does look like a frame-up."

Shayne rubbed his gaunt chin thoughtfully. "It's peculiar. It looks like half pure circumstance, and half frame-up. As if someone killed her, and then looked around for a possible suspect to frame."

"That other guy?" Corbett said eagerly. "The *E.T.* guy? He maybe knew about me and Roxie."

"Maybe," Shayne said. He stood up and signalled to the guard. "I'll let you know if I find anything, Corbett. Maybe you better think about telling me the whole story."

"I told it all, Shayne."

In the quiet room, Shayne stood looking after Corbett as the guard took him away. A bum rap or a frame-up, and one other possibility —Corbett could be guilty. As of now, Corbett still looked guilty. Shayne felt that he believed him and yet—Corbett was lying about something. The question was what, and was it important?

There was still only Corbett's word that the phantom *E.T.* existed, plus the coincidence of the disappearance of Emil Tozere. But Tozere's vanishing act could be just that, coincidence, and Corbett still was the only one who had time, motive, the temperament, and the earring.

On Corbett's side were the black car that had tried to run Shayne off the road, and the unseen man who had attacked him at the San Marcos Motel. Both incidents could show that someone else was heavily involved in Roxie Van Allen's death. Or they could have entirely different reasons. The attacker could have been simply trying to remove some woman's connection to Tozere, a woman other than Roxie. The black car could have been trying to stop him looking for Tozere, with no connection to the death of Roxie.

There was still no real connection between Tozere and Roxie Van Allen. Until there was, it was like working on two separate cases. And Shayne sighed in the silent room. He turned to leave. It was time to talk to Chief Will Gentry, and he did not think that Gentry would be happy to see him.

VIII

CHIEF GENTRY was not happy to see Mike Shayne. "Since when do you help punk killers, Mike?" he barked.

The bluff Chief of Police sat behind his desk chewing on the stump of a no longer lighted cigar. Gentry was not alone. The elongated figure of Shayne's reporter friend, Tim Rourke, was stretched out in one of Will Gentry's office chairs.

"Never," Shayne said. "Is he a killer?"

Shayne sat down. Will Gentry clamped his jaws tighter on the cigar stump. Tim Rourke swung his long legs down to the floor and leaned toward Shayne.

"An habitual criminal kills his sweetheart, dumps her body into the bay, has no alibi, and you ask if he's a killer?" the tall newspaper man asked.

"He's not accused of being an habitual criminal, Tim, or is he?" Shayne said bluntly. He turned to Gentry. "Is he, Will?"

"You're off base this time, Mike," Will Gentry said. "We've got him cold."

"All circumstantial," Shayne said. "No witnesses, no weapon, no direct tie-in. You haven't even placed Corbett at the scene of the crime. Do you even know where the crime took place?"

"Not yet," Gentry admitted. "But it figures that in this kind of killing no one knows where it happened except Corbett and the Van Allen girl. There was no blood, no shots, nothing. He knocked her into the water and she drowned. I think we'll have to settle for Murder Two, an impulse killing. They had a fight and in she went."

"And it has to be Corbett just because you don't know of anyone else?" Shayne said. "What about the other man?"

"The shadow lover? Our friend with the initials *E.T.*? No trace, Mike, I think Corbett made him up."

Tim Rourke swore. "Damn it, Mike, what about the earring? Corbett had it! Only the murderer could have had that."

"And planted it in Corbett's room," Shayne said. "Don't forget it was ripped out, meaning that the killer knew he had it! If Corbett was the killer, why keep it around?"

Gentry swiveled in his chair, turning to look out the office window. "There was a fight. The earring was ripped out during the fight. Maybe it fell into his pants cuff, maybe it went into a pocket or stuck in his clothes. Who knows? When he undressed it fell out and rolled on the floor where we found it."

Shayne nodded slowly as he listened. Gentry was painting a logical picture. It could have been like that. And yet there was something wrong with it. Something that did not fit the facts of the case. Shayne could not place what was wrong. But he had some other objections.

"Someone else could have fought with her, found the earring,

and used it to frame Corbett," Shayne said.

"If there was anyone else."

"How come she was near the water in a borrowed bathing suit at midnight? With her phobia against water?"

"Maybe she wasn't, Mike. Maybe she was knocked out, put into the suit, and tossed in. We're still working on the suit. If we could prove it was that way it would be First Degree cold against Corbett."

"Corbett knew about her phobia. He'd be crazy to kill her that way."

"Everyone who knew her knew about her phobia," Gentry said. "That would apply to some unknown lover, too. That's why we figure it has to be second degree, and Corbett is our man. A frame implies premeditation, and this doesn't look premeditated."

"Not necessarily, Will," Shayne said. "The frame could have been thought up after the murder."

"Corbett's not on trial yet, Mike," Gentry said. "We'll look at any proof you can dig up."

"What about the bathing suit, Will?"

"We're still trying to trace it," Gentry said. "No laundry marks, no identification. It's a commonplace Jantzen suit. It could have been sold in a hundred stores in Miami alone."

"And the man with the initials *E.T.*?"

Gentry reached for a file on his desk and opened it. The gruff Chief of Police shuffled through the papers in the file. He brought out a single sheet.

"We went back as far as we could in Roxie's life. We got three names: Eddie Tanner, Etienne Tallifero, and Elmer Tresh. Tanner is a strong-arm boy who knew her before Corbett. He's inside doing five-to-ten right now. Tallifero is a dancer, been out in California for two years. The L.A. cops say he's clean as a baby's first tooth. Tresh is a kid who dated her nine years ago. He's married now, works in the city clerk's office, and he was playing poker all night and can prove it."

"No one else?" Shayne asked.

"No."

Shayne rubbed his chin. "Did any of them claim the shirt or that bracelet? Did any of them give her the bracelet?"

"They say no, Mike," Gentry said.

Tim Rourke burst out again. "She could have gotten that shirt and bracelet from anyone. Will asked the Bowles girl about them, and the girl never heard of them. She never heard of any unknown lover."

Shayne raised an eyebrow. "Bowles? What Bowles girl?"

"Sally-Ann Bowles," Gentry said, "the Van Allen girl's roommate."

"She was in here?" Shayne asked.

"Who do you think told us about Roxie's phobia against water? She read about Roxie's death and came in to tell us," Gentry said. "She thought it was murder right away."

Shayne thought about Sally-Ann Bowles. The woman seemed in a hurry to cry murder. And she had lied to the police. Corbett had said Sally-Ann knew about the phantom lover. The redhead decided he would have a talk with Sally-Ann Bowles. But at this moment, Will Gentry was watching him, and Shayne had the feeling that Gentry was beginning to suspect that Shayne had more than an altruistic interest in saving an innocent man. The Chief did not miss much.

"You seem mighty interested in this unknown *E.T.*," Gentry said.

"Is there something you know that I don't? This is murder, Mike. Don't hold out on me."

"Would I do that, Will?" Shayne said innocently.

"Yeh, you would."

"When I have something real, I'll tell you," Shayne said.

"You do that," Gentry said as a parting shot.

Tim Rourke walked out of the office and down the corridor with Shayne. The lean reporter was still scowling as he walked. But the instinct of the newsman was too strong for Rourke to waste much time on arguing.

"I think you're wrong, Mike," Rourke said, "but do you know something we don't?"

"Maybe, Tim," Shayne said, "but I can't talk about it yet. You can do me a favor, though. You could check back in your files and see who Manny Corbett worked with on all his jobs, okay? I've got a hunch."

"You thinking about a gang Rourke said.

"Stranger things have happened, Tim."

Rourke shook his head. "Not Roxie, Mike. Gentry checked her all the way back. No gang connections except Corbett. She was just a dumb blonde stripper with a talented body, no education, and going nowhere."

"Check Corbett's friends and associates anyway, Tim."

"Of course, Mike," Rourke said, "and keep me posted."

Shayne nodded, and the two men separated at the sidewalk as

they left the building and walked into the night. It was dark now, and Shayne strode quickly to his car. He drove to the nearest tavern and parked. Inside the tavern he strode to the telephone booth. He dialed a number and waited. The voice that finally answered was low and thick as if muffled.

"Yeh?" the voice said.

"Mike Shayne. I need some music. Call this number in five minutes," and he read off the number of the booth and hung up. He lighted a cigarette and stood out in front of the booth waiting. He went to the bar and ordered a cognac with water on the side. He had nearly finished the drink when the telephone jangled in the booth. He picked it up.

On the other end there was only breathing.

"This is Shayne," he said. "I want to know about Roxie Van Allen. Anything about who she knew, where she went, all that. I'll pay. Pass the word fast, I need it fast."

The breathing stopped on the other end of the line, and the telephone went dead. But Mike Shayne had sent out the word to the stool-pigeons and small-timers who sold information, or who could locate someone who had the information. If anyone knew about the phantom lover of Roxie Van Allen, Shayne would get the information one way or another—if he, and the informant, were lucky.

He paid for his cognac and walked back out to his car. He drove through the darkness, the great glow of the city against the warm sky, toward Sally-Ann Bowles. The dancer still lived in the apartment she had shared with Roxie Van Allen. It was in a good but not gaudy building in a bright part of Miami Beach. Shayne opened his window to let the air blow on his face as he drove across the causeway from Miami to the Beach.

The doorman had trouble getting an answer from Sally-Ann Bowles, but finally the girl answered her intercom. She told Shayne to come up. He rode up the elevator to the sixth floor and stepped out into an elegant hallway. The Bowles woman was waiting in her open doorway. She motioned Shayne inside.

As Shayne entered he had the distinct impression that Sally-Ann had not been alone long. The odor of cigar smoke hung in the air. Sally-Ann Bowles did not look like a cigar smoker. He glanced over her shoulder curiously.

IX

SALLY-ANN BOWLES was a tall, slender, very attractive brunette. Mike Shayne looked at her and remembered the picture of Roxie Van Allen. The two of them together must have been a sight to make strong men weep.

"So you're Mike Shayne?" Sally-Ann said.

"In person," Shayne said drily.

"Sit down. How about a drink?"

"A little cognac, if you have it. Water."

"Remy Martin okay?"

"Make it a lot of cognac," the detective said.

The tall girl went to a small cabinet for the squat green bottle. Shayne watched her as she poured. Her slim, tapered black slacks fitted like her skin. Her dark green blouse was discreetly filled. But it was her wrist that protruded from the green sleeve as she poured that Shayne noticed—the wrist was red and bruised.

"One cognac," the girl said as she handed Shayne his glass.

She sat down on a high-backed modern armchair and faced Shayne where he sat on the couch. Her eyes were cool, but her slender hands shook faintly on her glass. There was a certain defiance in her eyes. Shayne wondered why she would be defiant before he had asked a question.

"All right," Sally-Ann said, "what did the little rat send you here for? What did he tell you?"

"The little rat? Who do you mean?" Shayne said.

"Corbett! Who else?" Sally-Ann replied.

Shayne narrowed his grey eyes and watched the girl's face. Did she know or suspect he had serious doubts about the small hoodlum

guilt? He let it pass for the moment.

"He said you were Roxie's roommate, and that you knew about her steady friend in the wings," Shayne said.

"I was her roommate," Sally-Ann said.

"And the new steady boy?"

"The little creep is dreaming," the girl said.

"Why would he tell me that if it wasn't true?"

"To save his putrid hide, what else?" the girl snapped.

"You think he killed Roxie?"

"Who else? He went out with her that night, she never came back. She told me she was going to some beach tavern with him."

"You're lying!" Shayne snapped sharply.

The girl paled but her eyes flashed. "Prove it!"

"Who was your visitor before me?"

"I was alone! Reading!"

"And smoking a cigar?" Shayne said. The girl did not answer, and Shayne said, "You knew who I was, and that I was working on Roxie's murder, before I ever came in here. Who told you I was working on the case? Only about five people knew!"

The girl was white as death. "Get out of here!"

Shayne stood up. Suddenly he stepped to the girl and grabbed her wrist. The girl cried out in pain. Shayne dropped her wrist and stepped back. The girl began to cry. He held her painfully gripped wrist as she sobbed.

"I'm—scared. Leave me alone. Please—"

"Was it Arcaro? Lawyer Arcaro and some of his muscular pals?"

The sobbing girl shook her head, but her fear betrayed her. Even through her tears her eyes stared in fright at Shayne when he mentioned the lawyer's name. Arcaro had been here. Shayne had wondered why Arcaro had taken such an unimportant case. Hired by 'friends' of Corbett, the lawyer had said. Shayne had a shrewd suspicion that the men this morning in the black car had been some of Corbett's 'friends.' For some reason they didn't want him on the case.

"They told you not to talk to me?" the red-headed detective asked.

The girl nodded, her slim body still moving convulsively.

"All right, Sally-Ann, I promise not to tell the police or mention your name. Did Roxie have a regular lover besides Corbett?"

Her voice was a whisper. "Yes, but I never saw him or knew his name. She was away at night a lot, sometimes for days. She was very careful. I think he was married, and his wife had money. He gave her things, expensive things."

"You don't know where they met?"

"I think he had a place," Sally-

Ann said. "Here in Miami. She used to call me at night. I know it was a local call, but I never knew where it was."

"She called at night?"

Sally-Ann nodded. "Late, always after midnight. It was funny, she never had anything to say. She just seemed to want to talk. Nothing important at all."

"As if the man had left her," Shayne said slowly. "As if she had been left alone somewhere?"

The girl nodded. "Like that, yes. I asked her a couple of times why she went with a man who left her alone at night so much. She was sort of sad about it, but she said he didn't always leave her, and that he couldn't help it when he did. I think she had real hopes about this man, whoever he was. I guess she hoped he'd maybe even marry her. The stupid idiot!"

"Do you think she saw him the night she died?" Shayne said.

"I don't know. She didn't come home. I told you the truth. She said she was going out with Corbett. Anyway, what reason would the other guy have to kill Roxie? She was doing it all the way he wanted. Corbett now, he could have done it. He was jealous as hell, the stupid little rat!"

"You don't much like Corbett, do you?"

The girl laughed aloud. "Like him? I hate his guts. Yeh, it's the old story. The woman scorned. You'll snoop it out sooner or later so I might as well tell you if the little louse hasn't told you already. I was Manny's girl for a while. I introduced him to Roxie. He took one look at Roxie and I was out. The little weasel threw me over!"

"For Roxie, and yet you stayed with Roxie?"

"Do I look like the type of girl who has to worry about losing one man?" Sally-Ann said.

"You'd be surprised," Shayne said. "I've seen a lot of beautiful women who could have almost any man, but they want the one they can't have."

"Interesting, but that's not me," Sally-Ann said.

Shayne tugged on his left earlobe. "I wonder. Roxie steals your man, or at least he takes after Roxie. You stay with her. But then she gets a new man and doesn't want your man anymore. She gives your former boy a hard time. That could make you real mad."

"It didn't," Sally-Ann snapped.

"Or maybe you even tried to start up with Corbett again, but he was still hot for Roxie. So you killed her and framed him."

"No, Shayne," the girl said.

Shayne pressed it harder. "You blew the whistle and told the police about Roxie's phobia. You knew about the phantom lover, but you lied to the police. You knew she was meeting Corbett that night. You know where Corbett lives. You could easily have planted the earring. You hated them both, so

you killed Roxie and framed Corbett."

Sally-Ann began to shiver again. "I lied to the police because I was sure Corbett killed her. I liked Roxie a lot, she was a nice girl. I was sure he had killed her. I wanted him to burn!"

"What do you think now?"

"I don't know. I still can't think of anyone else who would have done it. She didn't have an enemy in the world. Only you seem to think he didn't do it, so I don't know now."

"What about the unknown boyfriend? Or maybe his wife, if he had one?" Shayne said.

"I never thought about that," Sally-Ann said.

"Think about it and try to remember anything you can tell me about this mystery man," Shayne said. "And what else did Arcaro and his boys tell you tonight? Did you recognize any of them besides Arcaro?"

The girl's voice was a whisper again. She shivered in the hot room.

"They told me to say I was with Rudy Mangin all that night, the night of the murder. One of them was Pete O'Banion. I didn't recognize the other. I wasn't with Rudy. I don't like Rudy Mangin. I was at the *Dave & Joe Club,* backstage mostly. I went out for some drinks. Some alibi."

"Is Mangin a friend of Corbett's?"

The girl nodded. "Him and O'Banion, too. They worked on jobs sometimes. I don't know; I guess I was with Mangin. I guess that's what I'll say."

"You'll only get in trouble that way," Shayne said.

"Who cares? They'll cut me. I know them. They'll break my arm, cut my face."

Shayne touched the shivering girl. "Call Will Gentry. Tell him the truth, and tell him all you told me. He'll protect you."

"Sure," Sally-Ann said. "Maybe he'll protect me."

Shayne left Sally-Ann sitting there in her high-backed modern chair. She had her head down, her drink still barely touched on the table beside the chair. He left and went down into the street. He walked in the night to his car.

In the car he thought about Sally-Ann Bowles. She had lied to the police, and she had a motive of sorts. She knew about the mystery lover. She could have followed Roxie, killed her, and framed Corbett. Women scorned had done worse than that. Yet he liked the girl. She seemed honest enough. She had told him about Arcaro and his boys, Mangin and O'Banion.

Arcaro, Rudy Mangin and Pete O'Banion. Three nice men. He was beginning to think he knew what Corbett was lying about. And why Arcaro had taken the cheap case. Distracted by his thoughts as he drove through a dark side street of

the Beach toward the nearest causeway, he did not see the black car until it had pulled out of a cross street directly into his path.

The same black car.

Shayne jammed on his brakes. He had seen the car in good time despite his distraction. He pulled the emergency brake, opened the door on his side, and rolled out the door to the ground all in one fluid, rapid motion.

He hit the road on his left shoulder, rolled, and came up with his automatic in his hand and pointed toward the black car. In the shelter of his own car he tensed and waited. But nothing moved ahead.

No one got out of the black car. It sat there across the road, blocking his way, its doors still closed.

Crouched low, Shayne moved a step around his own car toward the other vehicle. Almost instantly he sensed his mistake. Before he could turn, the three men who had been in the bushes were on him.

Two of the men grabbed his arms and hung on. The third man swung something against his wrist. Shayne gritted his teeth against the pain, but his automatic dropped from his paralyzed fingers.

The instant the gun dropped he felt the pressure lessen on his arms. With a sharp wrench he tore his left hand loose and swung. His fist smashed into the face of one of the men. He went down as if axed.

The detective whirled and smashed his fist against the nose of the second man. He felt the nose break. The man swore in pain and anger. In that instant Shayne recognized Pete O'Banion. He tensed to swing again.

The third man, behind him, hit him on the head with the small, weighted club he had struck Shayne's wrist with. The club struck sharp, quick, and expert.

The throbbing pain was the last Shayne remembered.

X

MIKE SHAYNE came awake. For a long moment he felt that he was floating in a silent vacuum. Then his head began to ache and throb.

His wrist hurt. He looked around.

He was lying on a bed in a pitch dark room. There was no light except a thin line under a door that seemed a long way off. He listened. There were no voices and no sound of movement near. The only sounds were people walking somewhere far off on a carpeted floor, the faint sound of moving water, and something that seemed like the noise of city traffic far below.

He sat up. For a moment he swayed on the bed, his eyes flashing colored lights. He held on and the room steadied. He realized that the ache in his head was from more than a single blow. His brain was thick, fuzzy, and nausea clawed at his stomach.

He was suddenly almost sure that he had been drugged. Which meant they had wanted him quiet, and the next step was to find out where he was.

He looked around the almost pitch dark room, shaking his head in an effort to clear it. There was something familiar about the room. He reached out toward the dim outlines of a lamp on the table beside the bed.

Something rustled. He looked down and saw that there was a patch of whiteness about six inches square in the middle of his chest. He touched it. A piece of paper, pinned to his shirt. He removed it and turned on the light.

In the sudden glare Shayne blinked and stared around him slowly. The room was very familiar.

He was in his own bedroom.

He was on his own bed, in his own apartment. His suit coat was neatly hung over a chair, his shoes under the bed. Nothing at all was out of place or disturbed in the room. Then he smelled the odor—alcohol.

He sniffed his shirt. He had been doused with some kind of cheap whisky. He looked at the piece of paper in his hand. It was a note neatly typed on his own machine.

Peeper,
Lay off the Corbett case. We are not playing games. You woke up in your own bed—this time. It could be the Bay. Think about it.

A succinct message—quick, neat, cool and complete, exactly like the way he had been trapped. He put the note carefully on the table beside the bed. The police chemists could work it over and maybe come up with more on his muscular friends. He had a certain desire to meet them again, especially the one who had sapped him. At least he knew one of them—Pete O'Banion.

Shayne got swayingly to his feet, his head throbbing like a jazzed-up tom-tom. There was a good-sized lump on his head. He tested

his wrist. It was sore but not broken. He saw his holster across the room on a chair, the automatic returned to it. He looked at his watch. Almost one A.M. He had been out for hours. He reached for the telephone.

The bright voice of Pete answered from the desk. "Mr. Shayne. How you feel now?"

"How should I feel?" Shayne said.

Pete's voice chuckled. "Boy, you sure had a snootfull. Never saw you like that."

"How was I?"

"Staggering drunk," Pete said with a certain relish. "Your friends had to hold you up all the way to your room. Boy, did you reek."

So that was how they had done it. Drugged and doused with cheap booze, and walked across the lobby in plain sight. They had gotten Pete to open the door of his apartment. Cool boys.

"Get me Lucy, her home number," Shayne said to Pete.

He lighted a cigarette with his shaky fingers. The acrid smoke burned his nostrils, but the bite helped to clear his muddied brain.

"Michael?" Lucy's voice said. "I've been trying to get you. Are you all right?"

"I've been sleeping, Angel," Shayne said drily. "I'm okay. Anything happen?"

"Nothing, Michael, I just worried when you didn't call in," Lucy said from her bed.

"No calls from anyone?"

"Tim called once, but he said it would keep."

"Okay, Angel, I'll be in early. Right now I need some sleep."

"I thought you said you'd been sleeping, Michael."

"It wasn't restful," Shayne said.

The noise came just as he hung up.

A movement outside his door. Shayne stepped softly away from the telephone. He walked silently toward the door, his stockinged feet making no sound. In the line of light beneath the door he could see the faint shadow of someone standing there. Just as Shayne reached the door there was a tentative knock, a light tapping. Shayne jerked the door open, crouched and ready.

The short, bald man who stood there tried to leap away. But Shayne's big paw clamped on his fleshy shoulder, and he hauled him inside and slammed the door shut. He leaned against the door, smiling a wolfish smile at the bald little man, who squawked like a throttled chicken.

"Lay off, Shayne! I was comin' to see you!"

"Do you always stop to listen a while, Sponger?" Shayne said.

"You never know," the bald man said. "Maybe I hear something."

Shayne watched the little man. Sponger Joplin. The Sponger was dressed in his usual loud sport

jacket, silver tie, pearl grey shirt, and checked slacks. The third-rate bookie, and first-rate stool-pigeon, was a snappy dresser. The Sponger was also a runner for Big Vic Cartwright's organization. It gave him some safety, as long as he never stooled on Big Vic or his boys. The Sponger was careful about that.

"Besides, I'm polite," Joplin said. "You was on the phone."

"I'm off the phone," Shayne said, "what's on your mind?"

Sponger hesitated. It was obvious that the stoolie had something to sell, but Sponger had not yet made up his mind whether or not it was wise to sell it. Joplin licked his fleshy lips.

"It's worth a C-note," Sponger said.

"Ten," Shayne said.

Again Sponger hesitated. He shifted his feet in the pointed-toed shoes and his round eyes peered up at Shayne.

"Word's out you wants to hear about Roxie," Sponger said.

"The word's no lie," Shayne said. "You've got something I want to hear?"

"What else?" Sponger said.

"Okay," Shayne said. "If it's what I need it's worth the hundred. Talk."

The Sponger looked around him. Even here in Shayne's room, he could not escape the habits of a lifetime. A frightened lifetime. The walls had ears and eyes, that was Sponger's watchword. The bald man hunched his shoulders, leaned forward like a conspirator, and whispered even now. Shayne had seen The Sponger ask a man in a bar for the time in the same way. It was a reflex by now.

"A month ago, maybe two, Roxie laid ten on the nose of this plater up by Hialiah," Sponger began. "The plater comes in. I figure it was a boat race, only no one put me in the know, the rats. Siggy, the book by *The Blue Penguin,* tells me as a favor to Roxie I should deliver the bundle.

"So I calls Roxie to give her the cool news, see? She says thanks, only she don't like she should let that kind of loot lie around the Club while she's working. That plater paid off thirty to one, see? So she thinks a while, and then she tells me to take the cash to this here address she gives me. She tells me to take it later, around midnight or after."

"Get to the point," Shayne snapped.

"Okay, okay," Sponger protested. "So I took, see? It was a hotel-apartment like this one and kind of near here. Only the pad ain't in Roxie's name, get it? I mean, that's the kind of stuff I got eyes for, so I remembers real good. So I go up, give Roxie the bread, and blow the scene fast. She was nervous, and she don't try to stop me."

"What name and what address?" Shayne barked. The red-

head tried to focus his foggy brain. This could be the break he was looking for.

Sponger licked his fat lips. "I ain't seen no green."

Shayne reached into his pocket. His money was still there. His attackers had been professionals. He counted out one hundred dollars. The bills vanished into Sponger Joplin's pudgy hand faster than a fish down a seal's gullet.

"The name was Thomas, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Thomas," Sponger said, and added an address that was no more than four blocks from Shayne's apartment. Edward Thomas! *E.T.* It sounded like the break. Sponger Joplin was already on his way to the door. Shayne stopped him.

"Another twenty-five for another address," Shayne snapped.

Sponger stopped in his greedy tracks. The bald little man turned, his eyes bright with the prospect of two sales for one trip.

"Pete O'Banion and Rudy Mangin," Shayne said. "Where do I find them when I want them?"

"Who wants them?" Sponger said. "They got muscles, Shayne!"

"They work for Cartwright's competition."

"Fifty bucks," Sponger bargained.

Shayne counted out the fifty dollars.

"They hang out pretty regular in the back room down *Dave & Joe's Cellar,*" Sponger said, his hands counting the bills without looking at them.

By the time Shayne had realized that this was how they knew Sally-Ann Bowles so well, and that he could kill two birds with one stone by checking on Sally-Ann's alibi, Sponger Joplin was long gone.

Shayne poured four fingers of Martel and drank half of the good cognac in one gulp. He considered the pound of good sirloin in his refrigerator. But not for long. He finished the Martel and swayed back to his bed. He was asleep.

XI

MIKE SHAYNE awoke with the Miami sun streaming in through his opened window. There was a foul taste in his mouth, his head still ached, and his wrist was sore. Otherwise he felt fine. He got up and made a full pot of coffee, a half a pound of bacon, and six eggs scrambled soft.

Feeling much better with breakfast in him, he called Lucy at the office. His brown-eyed secretary was there and bright.

"Good morning, Angel," Shayne said. "Any developments?"

"Angus Morgan called to see if you had found anything," Lucy said.

"So early? Mr. Morgan is eager about a son-in-law he doesn't like," Shayne said. "Nothing else? No word from Will Gentry?"

"No, Michael," his pert secretary said.

Shayne took a deep breath. "Er, did Gentry say anything about my car?"

"Your car?"

"I seem to have misplaced it. Over on the Beach. You better call Will and ask about it. I'm coming in, but I have to make a stop first. See you soon, Angel."

And Shayne hung up before his surprised secretary could ask anything about how he happened to have misplaced his car. Shayne grinned as he clapped his panama on his unruly red hair and left his apartment. Down at the desk Pete smiled knowingly.

"How do you feel, Mr. Shayne?"

"Alive," Shayne said. "I'll need a taxi, I think, Pete."

"What's the matter with your car?"

"I seem to have misplaced it," Shayne said.

Pete looked puzzled. "Joe told me you left it in the garage like always. He mentioned it because you didn't leave it in your right place."

His muscular friends of the night before seemed to have done everything right. They had even brought back the car. Shayne thanked Pete, and left the clerk with the light slowly dawning on his face that the men last night had perhaps not been friends. In the garage he climbed into his car and drove out into the sun.

The Heverly Arms Hotel, the address Sponger Joplin had given him, was only a few blocks drive. The Hotel was almost exactly like his own place. He parked and walked through the lobby up to the desk. There was no one at the desk except a girl at the switchboard. Shayne assumed his most official manner.

"Police business," he snapped, "anyone here?"

The startled girl turned. "Police? I don't—"

"The manager, okay?"

The girl blinked. "Oh, yes."

Shayne waited. "How about getting him?"

"Oh, yes, of course. Mr. Barnes. I'll call him."

The flustered girl manipulated her cords and buttons. A red-faced man popped out of a door behind

the desk. Shayne flashed his credentials and put them back into his pocket. He let Mr. Barnes have a good view of his holstered automatic.

"You're the manager, Barnes?" Shayne snapped.

"I am," Barnes said, his eyes still blinking from the brief view he had had of Shayne's credentials.

"You have a Mr. and Mrs. Thomas living here?"

"The Thomases? Why, yes, in Four B. They're not home now. They've been away."

"How long have they lived here?"

"About ten months—just about," Barnes said.

Shayne produced his pictures of Roxie and Emil Tozere. The manager studied them for some time. Then he called over the girl from the switchboard. They conversed. The manager turned to Shayne.

"Well, officer, it looks like them, in a way," Barnes said. "I mean, the woman looks a lot like Mrs. Thomas, only—well, she usually dressed rather conservatively. I never before saw her in a dress like that. And I never saw that man with her."

Shayne nodded to himself—two points for Corbett. Barnes did not recognize Corbett, and Roxie had worn demure clothes as a mild type of disguise when she appeared here as Mrs. Thomas.

"The man is about the same size," Barnes went on. "I mean, he looks a lot like Mr. Thomas, but Mr. Thomas wore glasses, quite thick ones with large frames. Sunglasses mostly, but they were prescription. He said the Miami sun bothered his eyes. He came from up north somewhere. And Mr. Thomas always wore a hat, he said he couldn't break the habit even down here."

Again Shayne nodded. Dark glasses and a hat. Probably a change of clothes. And a carefully nurtured out-of-towner facade. But it looked like Roxie Van Allen and Emil Tozere had been playing house—very steady house. No wonder Anne Tozere saw little of her husband. And the hotel would have a side entrance and exit for Tozere to make his midnight trips home to his loving wife and her money. Leaving Roxie alone to call Sally-Ann Bowles.

Shayne had little doubt that he had found his connection. He was not sure whether Angus Morgan and Anne Tozere would be happy or sad. And he wanted to know a little more about their habits, and the whereabouts of the elusive Emil Tozere.

"You say they've both been away? How long?"

"Just over a week, I should say. I remember particularly because they had gone out on the town the night before, and that wasn't like them. They were more homebodies when they were in town."

"They were out of town a lot? Both of them?" Shayne asked.

"A great deal," Barnes said. "They were away so much they never used our maid service. Said it would be a waste, and that they liked to keep their own house when they were at home."

"Business, I suppose?"

Barnes nodded. "Mr. Thomas is a salesman, electronics. I believe Mrs. Thomas is in show business. She had to do engagements out of town."

A smart man, Emil Tozere, Shayne decided. Clever enough to stick to his real business in case anyone asked professional questions. Roxie, too. Only he thought that Barnes would be very surprised to know that Roxie had rarely travelled farther than Miami Beach. Barnes was, apparently, not a night-clubber or he might have seen Roxie. Except that *Mrs. Thomas* dressed demurely, and in a smoky night club all naked women looked about the same.

"They went out the night before they left?" Shayne asked. "In other words they returned that night and left the next day? Is that right?"

"Well, I—Miss Stoffer?" Barnes said.

The girl at the switchboard was eager to help. "They must have been out late. I didn't see them come home. But Mr. Thomas was here the next day. He made some calls. I saw him go back up in the morning."

"Did anyone see them leave?"

Barnes shook his head. "No, but their car is gone."

Shayne nodded slowly. So Tozere had been here the day after the murder. That fitted. The Morgan household said he had spent the night at home. He had gone out early and come here. Almost certainly looking for Roxie—unless he had killed her.

Shayne wanted to see the inside of the 'Thomas' apartment. With his hunch about what Corbett was not telling, Tozere looked like the best possible murder suspect. If he had risked coming back here, it was probably to cover up.

Shayne thanked Barnes and the girl and walked out the front door. Outside, he doubled around the block to the side entrance, and climbed the stairs to the fourth floor. At the door to Four-B he went to work with his ring of special keys. The third key opened the door. He closed it behind him.

He was in a small foyer. Cautiously, he began to search the rooms. Cautiously because it had occurred to him that Tozere could be hiding here—no maid service and his car gone as a cover. As he walked from room to room, he thought about what this meant for Corbett. A witness now placed Tozere as the last to see Roxie alive. Tozere and Roxie had been seen together *after* she had left

Corbett. It was looking better for Corbett, and worse for Gentry.

The apartment was not large. There was a living room with a dining alcove near the kitchen. A bathroom opened off the living room, and a door showed where the bedroom was. The furniture was neat and clean but very ordinary, and obviously supplied by the building.

The living room was immaculate. Even the ashtrays were empty and clearly wiped clean. All surfaces had been wiped clean. It looked very much like he had been right—Tozere had come back to erase any connection between himself and Roxie Van Allen. There was nothing in the living room to show that it had ever been lived in.

In the kitchen there was food in the refrigerator, and two washed glasses in the basket on the sink. The refrigerator had not been turned off. Tozere had not bothered to keep up the fiction of a business trip. That would figure. The missing son-in-law would have been in a hurry with Roxie's body floating in the bay.

The bathroom yielded the first concrete evidence—perfume, hair curlers, and shaving cream in the cabinet. Shayne stared hard at the items in the cabinet, and at the cabinet itself. It had not been wiped. There were still smudges on the mirror. Tugging hard on his earlobe, Shayne studied the bathroom. Nothing had been wiped clean, and all the evidence of a man and woman sharing the place was still there. Puzzled, he walked on through the bathroom and into the bedroom by the second door.

A quick look in the closets made him tug harder on his ear. Both closets were partly full. Male clothing on one, female in the other! The shirts hanging in the man's closet had the monogram, *E.T.* The woman's clothes were just about Roxie's size. Shayne studied the whole bedroom. All the surfaces, ashtrays, mirrors, were wiped and sparkling! He was about to go to the two bureaus to look into the drawers when he noticed the bed.

The bed was odd, peculiar. He stared at it.

The bed was off center! It stood between two identical closets, but was much closer to one, actually butting against the door of the closet to the right.

Then Shayne smelled it. An odor he knew only too well.

The odor of death.

Shayne stood in the silent bedroom and looked at the closet being held closed by the bed. He walked to the bed and moved it. Underneath the bed, where the bed should not have been, there was a wide stain on the rug. A dark stain. He did not have to look closer to know what it was.

He opened the closet door and

looked down at the body of a man. He did not need a view of the face to know that he had found Emil Tozere.

Shayne looked at the body for some time. The odor was overpowering. Tozere had been dead a long time. With no maid service he had rotted here in the closet undiscovered for days. Then Shayne saw the shiny object.

It was on the floor half-hidden by the body. Covering his face he bent down to look at it without touching it. Then he began to swear hard and long.

The object was a cheap steel money clip. It was monogrammed with the initials, *M.C.*

XII

WILL GENTRY sat in a chair in the bedroom as the Medical Examiner worked over the body of Emil Tozere. Tim Rourke was talking to the nervous manager, Barnes. Gentry's men were going over the apartment with a vacuum cleaner. Shayne stood near the window.

Gentry scowled at Shayne. "Anything else you 'forgot' to tell me, Mike?" he growled.

"No, Will, that's all of it," Shayne said. He had left out nothing from Angus Morgan to Sponger Joplin. He had told about the San Marcos Motel, Sally-Ann Bowles, and the hard-men who had attacked him twice.

"The Bowles girl came down

and told us her story," Gentry said. "It doesn't mean much now. Tozere was Roxie's mystery lover, and Corbett killed them both. This cooks him, Mike. And it's Murder One now. I'll stake my job on that clip being his. They'll have a make and prints in a half an hour."

"It figures to be Corbett's clip," Shayne agreed. "But what about O'Banion and the other muscle? What's their stake in this?"

"Who knows?" Gentry said. "An old gripe against Corbett so they want him cooked. Or maybe he called for them to help and keep you away from finding Tozere. That fits better."

Shayne nodded. It was a possibility. Corbett could be guilty as sin and playing all ends against the middle, but Shayne did not think so. He had a strong hunch that O'Banion, Mangin and the other hard-types were only interested in protecting themselves. While he mused, the Medical Examiner stood up and began to roll down his sleeves.

"It's hard to be sure, Chief, but from the state of the body I'd say he's been dead a shade over a week. I'll peg it better after the autopsy. Stabbed twice dead center. One wound is low, just below the heart. The second is right on target, probably got it after he was down."

"The first one low?" Gentry said. "Like a small man?"

"Or a woman," Shayne said.

"Shut up, Mike!" Gentry roared. "I could have your license."

"Nuts, Will," Shayne snapped. "You know I have a right to protect my client as long as there's no evidence of crime. You couldn't get me a five dollar fine."

Gentry seemed about to explode when the first of his men came to report. Shayne listened. There were few fingerprints, the place had been wiped clean except in the kitchen and bathroom where they had found only the prints of Roxie and Tozere. The two glasses had been washed.

The only prints that were not those of Tozere or Roxie were on the money clip. A single thumb print. Corbett's.

"That does it," Tim Rourke said.

The reports went on. Two kitchen knives had been found that fitted the wounds, both wiped clean. They were now on their way to the police laboratory. No matter how well a knife was wiped, some trace of blood was usually left. Neither Barnes, the manager, nor Miss Stoffer, remembered anyone asking for Thomas a week ago. But the side entrance had not been watched, and Emil Tozere's key was missing from the body.

Tozere's car was also missing. Gentry ordered a tracer on the car. Shayne let his eyes study the body of Tozere where it lay on the floor. The dead man was wearing the exact clothes described by the Morgan household: grey silk suit, white shirt, grey suede shoes, grey and white striped tie, no hat, wedding ring, wrist watch, diamond stick pin, and a single wilted carnation in his lapel.

Around the body were the grains of sand. White sand. Not much sand, but some on the floor of the closet and in the cuffs of the dead man's trousers. Sand came from a beach, and Roxie Van Allen had drowned. Shayne tugged on his earlobe as he stood up. Tozere had had sand in his cuffs the day after the murder. But he had gone home and, presumably, changed his clothes.

Shayne walked slowly around the apartment. The reports were still going on, but he was not listening. Perhaps Corbett was guilty, but if he wasn't then someone else had been in this apartment. He was looking for a sign, a mark, of that unknown person. The police had combed the place and found nothing anywhere except two

scraps of paper in a wastebasket near the telephone on the desk in the living room.

Shayne looked at the two scraps of paper again where they were spread out on the desk. One was no more than a few doodles and a single telephone number that had already been identified as that of Roxie's apartment in Miami Beach. The number had been written down, bordered, and filled in. Tozere was a doodler.

The second piece of paper had no telephone number on it, but it was covered with doodles. The major doodle was a dollar sign $ $ $ $ repeated over and over, and the figure 25,000 printed, bordered and filled in. Shayne looked down at this paper for a long time, rubbing his gaunt chin. Gentry came to stand beside him.

"Mike, don't hold out any more. At this point—"

Shayne nodded. "Not if I don't have to, Will."

"I just got the call. Corbett admits the money clip is his. He had to, because we can trace it. He claims he lost it. We'll charge him with this one tomorrow."

"That doesn't give me much time," Shayne said.

He motioned to Tim Rourke as he left. The lean reporter nodded. Shayne walked out and took the elevator down to the lobby. At the desk he smiled benignly at Miss Stoffer at the switchboard. Miss Stoffer was eager. Shayne guessed that she had not seen this much excitement in ten years.

"You said Tozere, or Thomas, made some telephone calls the day you thought he left. Do you keep a record for charges?"

"We sure do," Miss Stoffer said. The excited woman took out her charge sheet and shuffled the sheets to the right day. "He made four calls. One of them I know. It's the nearest liquor store. The other three I don't know."

Shayne jotted down the three numbers, and recognized one of them at once—the same number upstairs on the doodle paper, the apartment of Roxie Van Allen in Miami Beach. He walked to the nearest outside telephone and called Lucy. When his secretary answered he read her the two numbers.

"Why, Michael, one of them is Angus Morgan's house, I'm sure of it," Lucy said.

"Check it," Shayne said.

Lucy came on the line again in seconds. "Yes, it's the number he gave us—his house number."

"Okay, Angel, check the other one with our girl at the telephone company."

Shayne hung up tugging hard on his ear. Why had Tozere called his own home that day? And who had he called? Anne Tozere was supposedly away. Or was she? She had returned that afternoon, and there was no record of the time of the call. Roxie had already been

dead, and . . . Shayne stopped. Roxie had been dead—but Tozere had called Roxie's Miami Beach apartment? Why, and who? Sally-Ann Bowles? He was still puzzling over this when Tim Rourke emerged from the elevator.

Shayne and the cadaverous reporter walked into the bar of the hotel. Rourke ordered a rye and a cognac for Shayne. The reporter was grim.

"Corbett's through, Mike," Rourke said.

"Maybe, Tim, but I don't like it. Corbett is a punk, but he's not stupid. Why would he send me looking for a man he knew he had killed?"

"To cover, Mike," Rourke said. "He didn't just leave that money clip. He dropped it and didn't know it."

"He's mighty careless for a professional criminal," Shayne said. "Let's go over it. Gentry sees it that Tozere and Roxie were playing steady house and Corbett knew it. That night Tozere took Roxie out somewhere near the bay. Corbett showed up, knocked her out, dressed her in a bathing suit, and tossed her into the water. Then he identified her body the next day, and went right out and killed Tozere! In all this he accidentally got Roxie's earring, he lost his money clip when he killed Tozere and didn't miss it, and he sent me looking for a man with the initials *E.T.* when he knew he had already killed Tozere! On top of it he doesn't even plan an alibi—and he's a pro who always has an alibi!"

Rourke shifted uncomfortably in his seat in the bar booth. He did not answer for a moment. Then he shrugged his lean shoulders and sighed audibly. "It's got holes in it."

"Like Swiss cheese, Tim. What bothers me is that it's not even a decent frame-up! It has all the marks of a spur-of-the-moment attempt to make a desperate frame, and an amateur job at that."

"It's convinced Will," Rourke said.

"No, Tim, it hasn't. Will knows it stinks, but he's got no other clue, and Corbett is the right type. If Corbett wasn't a punk criminal, Gentry wouldn't believe it a minute."

"You think someone hoped for that?"

Shayne nodded. "That's just what I think. But what really has bothered me all along, Tim, is the bathing suit. Roxie didn't swim. It stands to reason she didn't put that suit on at midnight. Someone put it on her. Why? It has all the smell of an attempt to fake an accident. It might even have worked, if Roxie could swim."

"But, Mike, what about the earring?" Rourke said. "Only the killer could have had that."

Shayne nodded. "That earring bothers me, too. Roxie Van Allen

was a big girl, tall, and she was a dancer of sorts. She was also no babe in the woods. If someone tried to slug her, someone got mad and started a brawl, she would have fought back. But she was unmarked except for that bruise on her head. Corbett was unmarked, Tozere is unmarked. There's no signs of a fight."

"So he hit her unawares, really murder," Rourke said. "That isn't going to help Corbett. It will just bring him a step nearer to the chair."

"Then how did the earring get torn from her ear?" Shayne said.

Rourke stopped, stared at Shayne in the quiet bar room.

"That earring has no projections, no loops hanging, nothing to catch in clothing," Shayne said. "Just a small, round earring, without even a clasp because she had pierced ears. It was in her ear good. And there was no fight. So how did it get torn from her ear, and why?"

Rourke shrugged. "I don't know, Mike."

Shayne rubbed his chin. "I've got the feeling that the key is the way Roxie died. Why did a woman afraid of water die by drowning? It makes no sense. It has all the earmarks of a faked accident, except that the victim could not have had such an accident."

"The killer didn't know Roxie?" Rourke suggested.

Shayne nodded. "I've thought of that. But, Tim, if the killer didn't know Roxie, why kill her? Any of the Morgan household could have had a motive: Anne because Tozere was her husband; Angus because he loved his daughter; Alida for the same reason, Anne is her sister; and maybe even Donald the butler. Hening, too, could have wanted Tozere and Roxie dead. But to have motives, they had to know Roxie! And if they knew Roxie, they knew about the phobia!"

"In other words," Rourke said, "To try to kill Roxie by a fake drowning accident, the killer had to be a total stranger to Roxie. And if the killer was a total stranger, then he had no motive to kill."

Shayne nodded wearily. "That seems the size of it. Unless our killer is super-smart and planned the whole thing to throw us off, make us assume that no one who knew Roxie would try to fake an accident. Which brings us to Sally-Ann Bowles."

"And back to Corbett or even his friends," Rourke said.

"All right," Shayne said, "but I like Sally-Ann better. She was out to convict Corbett, she lied, and Tozere called her number after Roxie was dead."

"Motive?" Rourke said.

"Maybe she was in love with Tozere too. Tozere was a ladies man, and he took some woman to the San Marcos Motel right up un-

til two weeks or so ago. I thought it was Roxie, but now that we've found that apartment, we know that Emil Tozere wouldn't have needed a motel room for Roxie! No, he was cheating on Roxie with a third woman."

"Then why kill Tozere?"

Shayne scowled. "Tozere was killed because he had to be. I'm sure of that. He knew something, or he was blackmailing. Did you notice that doodling? Twenty-five thousand and a lot of dollar signs?"

Rourke was about to answer when a bellhop came into the bar paging Shayne. The red head went to the telephone. It was Lucy. She had the address of the third telephone number.

"It's *Dave & Joe's Cellar* over in Miami Beach," Lucy said.

It was the third string that led to *Dave & Joe's Cellar*. Shayne decided he would have to pay a double call on *Dave & Joe's.*

"Thanks, Angel," he said, and hung up.

He strode from the lobby and back into the bar. He told Rourke to do him a favor, and check on the exact whereabouts of Anne Tozere and Paul Hening on the night of the murder.

"Sure, Mike, I'll tell them I'm on the Tozere story, only I think you're way off base. I still think it's Corbett."

"That's just what I'm going to find out," Shayne said grimly.

He strode from the bar and out into the early afternoon sun. His car was where he had parked it hours before. He was about to climb in when he saw old Mary the flower seller. Mary was out in front of the Heverly Arms in her usual spot. Shayne looked at her for a moment. Tozere liked carnations, and Mary sold them. He walked over to the smiling old woman.

"Mike Shayne! Well, you in the market for a flower?" the old flower seller said.

"No, Mary, but information gets you a good fee," Shayne said.

"Shoot."

"This Mr. Thomas, he bought carnations from you?"

Old Mary nodded. "Yeh, he sure did. Red carnation at night, white every morning he was home. I'm sure gonna miss him. You on the case?"

"In a way, Mary. Did you ever see him with any other woman?"

"Only the blonde, his wife he said."

"Did you ever see anyone watching him or following him?"

The old woman shook her head. "Nope."

"How about Manny Corbett? Ever see him around? Or Pete O'Banion?" Shayne asked.

"Not around here, Mike. I know Manny. He's a punk."

"Thanks, Mary," Shayne said, and handed the old woman a ten dollar bill.

He could still see old Mary's smile as she looked at the ten when he drove over the causeway toward Miami Beach and *Dave & Joe's Cellar.*

XIII

DAVE CONCA was a swarthy man with a thick black mustache. He was the sole owner of *Dave & Joe's Cellar.* Joe Antonelli had died ten years ago from a bad case of crooked dice. This misadventure had made Conca careful.

"Sally-Ann don't come on until nine o'clock, Shayne," Conca said as Shayne leaned on the deserted bar in the empty nightclub. Two groups of men were having lunch in the entire place, and the waiters outnumbered the customers.

"You don't happen to remember if she got a phone call here about a week ago yesterday?" Shayne said.

"A week? Who are you kidding? Sally-Ann gets a lot of calls. A week ago!"

Shayne mentally agreed that the question was ridiculous, but he had not asked it to get an answer. He was stalling and looking. His grey eyes studied the interior of the nightclub. He was looking for the door to the back room, for some sign of Pete O'Banion. He knew he could not stall Dave Conca very long. He did not have to. A waiter had appeared from behind a curtain on the left to the rear of the bar section not twenty feet from where Shayne was standing.

"And a lot of callers coming here, right?" Shayne said, his eyes watching the waiter at the bar.

"Maybe," the careful Conca said.

Shayne drew out his picture of Emil Tozere. He showed it to Conca. He watched the waiter put three double ryes, straight with water chasers, on his tray. Three of them.

Conca looked at the picture of Tozere. "Him? I ain't never seen him around here," he said.

The waiter was arranging the drinks on the tray. They were all rye, but three different ryes and the waiter was being careful he knew which was which.

Shayne leaned close to Conca. "I'm going in the back room, Dave," he said softly and with a smile for anyone watching. "Now we can do it the hard way or the easy way. If you just walk away now and don't look back no one can say you knew I was going back there."

Conca tensed for a moment. He licked his lips, and looked at Shayne. Then the swarthy owner turned and walked toward the front of the Club talking to his waiters as he went. Shayne stepped up to the waiter who was just ready to leave the bar.

"Just walk steady and don't look back," he said, warningly. "Head for the back room and act like nothing was wrong. Move!"

The waiter moved. Shayne walked casually behind him and through the curtains to a closed door. The waiter knocked and identified himself. The door opened and he started in. The door began to close.

Shayne hurled his full weight against the door. It crashed against the man behind it. The man had been half-turned, closing the door with one hand. Shayne's sudden attack flung the door against the man, twisting the extended arm, and he went reeling to the floor clutching his twisted arm.

The waiter dove for cover, glasses and bottles crashing to the floor. Shayne leaped on the second man who had barely turned in surprise. This man had thick tape on his nose. It was the nose Shayne had broken in the trap last night. He broke it again with a short, murderous jab. The man went down.

The third man was clawing for his gun. The third man was Pete O'Banion. The gun was out. Shayne kicked it flying across the room. O'Banion swung. Shayne took the blow on his shoulder with a quick movement. The big redhead grinned and stepped inside O'Banion's next punch. He sank his big fist into the hoodlum's solar plexus, angling the punch upward. O'Banion crumpled to the floor.

The first man was struggling up, his left hand hanging limp, the wrist broken where it had been caught holding the door as Shayne first charged. Shayne picked up an unbroken bottle and flattened the man before he could come all the way up.

The man with the broken nose came back for more. He caught Shayne on the jaw. Shayne reeled. The man came on. Shayne ducked the next blow and hit him flush on the nose again. Blood spurted and the man howled. Shayne hit him in the groin, and the instant he doubled over chopped him with a rabbit punch. The man fell on his face motionless. Shayne turned to O'Banion who was just coming up again.

"All right, O'Banion, tell me about Corbett," Shayne said.

O'Banion swore and swung. Shayne sidestepped and punched for O'Banion's throat. The big muscleman croaked like a wounded frog. Shayne smashed his nose, not too hard. O'Banion reeled. Shayne stepped in and hit him in the left eye.

"Talk, punk, or I'll work you over all day," Shayne snarled.

O'Banion came on again. Shayne feinted him out and hit the same eye. O'Banion cursed. Shayne jabbed his open hand into O'Banion's throat. O'Banion gasped for breath. Shayne hit the left eye again.

"If you don't go out, O'Banion, you just get cut to pieces!"

Gasping for breath, O'Banion croaked, "I'll kill you!"

"Corbett, tell me about the job you boys were working on," Shayne snapped.

He hit O'Banion in the ribs. He felt a rib break. O'Banion screamed and swung wildly. Shayne slipped the erratic punch and smashed O'Banion's eye again. O'Banion went down. The hoodlum was covered with blood, gasping for breath through his battered windpipe.

"You and Mangin and Corbett were on a job the night Roxie died. Arcaro took Corbett's case to see he didn't talk. He probably told Corbett he could get him off without using the real alibi. But you were worried about what I'd find so you tried to stop me. Arcaro probably convinced Corbett it wouldn't help to tell, and you boys added the threat. If Corbett used his alibi, you boys would kill him!"

O'Banion lay there, gasping, bleeding, but his pig eyes only sneered up at Shayne.

"Arcaro told Corbett that you and Mangin wouldn't be any good as alibi witnesses anyway, right?" Shayne said.

"Go to hell, Shayne," O'Banion croaked.

Shayne bent down and grabbed the big hoodlum by the collar. He half lifted him and hit the left eye again. Then he hit the broken rib. O'Banion screamed. Shayne drew back his fist. O'Banion cowered on the floor.

"No," O'Banion cried. "No!"

"Talk!"

O'Banion cringed, hesitated. Shayne kicked him in the ribs. O'Banion howled.

"Okay!" O'Banion cried. "Yeh, we done a job, knocked off a jewelry store and Corbett took the stuff to fence. The punk worked lousy errands like that. If he sings to save his neck we got trouble. So Arcaro fixed it."

"Tell me about the night Roxie died."

O'Banion held tight to his broken ribs. "We give him the stuff. We was with him past midnight. In his pad. He was there waiting'."

"When did you get there?"

"Maybe ten," O'Banion said. "We was listin' the stuff. We don't trust that punk Corbett."

Shayne nodded grimly. It was what he had suspected. Arcaro took the case, promised he'd get Corbett off without using O'Banion and Mangin as the alibi. After Corbett was convicted, no one would believe his story about O'Banion and Mangin anyway. He was not sure Gentry would believe it even now. And Arcaro was right about one thing—Mangin and O'Banion would be bad alibi witnesses. The DA would say it was just a case of thieves hanging together.

"Where's the stuff?" Shayne said.

"Corbett fenced it already," O'Banion said.

Shayne sighed. It was going to be hard to prove that Corbett was with these two crooks. But at least he believed it. Corbett was innocent, and that meant he had work to do. He strode to the telephone and called Gentry. The Chief was not impressed.

"Okay, Mike, maybe they're telling the truth, but I need more than that. They'd lie if you looked at them cross-eyed."

"I had to beat it out of them," Shayne said.

"Maybe they made it look good," Gentry said.

"Okay, Will, the hard way then. Meanwhile, you can come and sponge them up. Maybe I solved a robbery for you anyway," Shayne said and hung up hard.

He sent the waiter for a length of rope and tied the three hoods up. He sat in the office waiting for the wagon. When it arrived he turned over his prisoners and left the Club.

XIV

MIKE SHAYNE got into his car and drove straight to Sally-Ann Bowles. It was a short drive. The beautiful brunette was at home and puffy-eyed from sleep.

"You woke me up, damn it," Sally-Ann said as she let him in.

"You don't have to worry about Arcaro, O'Banion or Mangin anymore," Shayne said. "The cops picked them up."

"Okay, you're forgiven for waking me. Coffee?"

"It's three o'clock in the afternoon," Shayne said.

"The cognac is where you saw it," Sally-Ann said. "For me it's six A.M."

Shayne poured four fingers of the Remy Martin and walked into the kitchen where the beautiful girl was fumbling with a pan and hot water. The jar of instant coffee stood open. She spooned a heaping measure of the instant poison into her cup and stood watching the pot heat. Shayne leaned on the door jamb.

"Tozere called you the day after Roxie was killed. Why?"

"Who the hell is Tozere?" Sally-Ann snapped, her eyes still staring at the pot of water that had not boiled.

"Emil Tozere, alias Edward Thomas, alias the mystery lover of Roxie Van Allen," Shayne said.

"Never heard of him," Sally-Ann said.

"He called here the day after Roxie died. He's dead, Sally-Ann, murdered, and there's a record of him calling here and *Dave & Joe's.*"

Sally-Ann watched the water finally boil. She turned off the flame and mixed her coffee. Then she sat down. She looked up at Shayne.

"A man called, yes. He had called *Dave & Joe's* too. He didn't give his name. He said he was look-

ing for Roxie. I hadn't read the paper then, and I guess he hadn't either."

"What time was this?"

"About nine in the morning, maybe a little later. I was mad, he woke me up," Sally-Ann said.

"What did you tell him?"

"That I didn't know. Roxie wasn't here."

"What else did he say?"

"Nothing much. He hung up quick. He mumbled something about a house and the beach and how Roxie was gone. I don't remember."

A house and a beach. Or a beach house! Of course! With Anne out of town Tozere might damn well have taken Roxie to the Morgan beach house. Shayne remembered that Anne had said she and Tozere had been there all weekend. No one else would come if they thought Anne and Tozere wanted to be alone!

"Don't go anywhere, Sally-Ann," Shayne said. "The police will be around sooner or later when they trace that phone call."

"Who can go anywhere on my pay?" Sally-Ann said.

Shayne left her moodily sipping her second cup of instant coffee and went down to his car. He got in and drove rapidly off toward the Morgan beach house. He crossed the causeway and turned south toward where the house was.

The Angus Morgan 'beach-house' was about as small as an apartment house, and, judging from the look of, twenty could have slept with room to spare. As Shayne stepped from his car onto the shell-and-gravel driveway he shaded his eyes against the afternoon sun and looked in all directions.

The only close house was another large beach-house about three-hundred yards away to the left. Shayne stepped up to the door and used a key from his special ring of keys. The door opened. He went inside and closed the door behind him. He saw that downstairs the house was one enormous living room, with a single door to the right into the kitchen. A door to the left led into a large shower and dressing room. The shower room opened onto the beach also, and there was an outside stairway that led up to the second floor from the shower room.

Shayne climbed the circular inside stairs and began to search in the upstairs bedrooms. None of them yielded any evidence of violence. A large bedroom had been recently used from the look of the hair-pins, blonde, and the used razor blades in the adjoining bathroom. That would be Tozere and Anne spending the weekend before Roxie was killed. A wilted red carnation floated in a glass on a bureau. Perhaps Tozere and Roxie had been here, too.

There was nothing else. No strange lipsticks, no green female

clothes that fitted Corbett's description of Roxie's clothes, no suspicious cigarette butts in the immaculate ashtrays. Shayne went downstairs again. He began in the giant living room, worked into the kitchen, and finally entered the shower-dressing room.

On the wall of the dressing room there were rows of neat hooks. They were arranged in groups of five with a shelf above each group. On all the hooks there hung a neat collection of beach wear: robes, towels, bathing suits, bathing caps, sun glasses on the shelves, beach bags, and on the floor the beach shoes. From each section it was easy to tell which Morgan, or close friend, belonged to each group of hooks.

The row nearest the exit door had a pair of simple black boxer trunks, an old silk robe, a writing-kit on the shelf, a spartan towel, and a pair of Japanese sandals. That would be old Angus Morgan himself. Next to Angus Morgan's section was that of Emil Tozere: skin-tight trunks in red sateen, large dark glasses, a giant towel, a short but gaudy robe and a pair of leather beach slippers.

Then came a row of three female bathing suits with caps on the same hooks, jeweled beach slippers, two large and soft towels in muted colors, two pairs of jeweled sun-glasses, and three robes of Chinese silk, all long and conservative. The bathing suits were all one-piece and all the same. Anne Tozere nee Morgan.

The row that had two bikini bathing suits in bright stripes, a short terry-cloth robe, a sweatshirt, a large pair of black-rimmed sunglasses, and no shoes at all, had to belong to Alida Morgan. And the final rows of men's beach wear had to belong to Paul Hening and Donald the butler. Hening's row had his name sewn in his simple boxer trunks. Donald's row had only a bathing suit, cheap, and one terry-cloth robe in white.

Shayne stopped. He narrowed his grey eyes. Something was wrong in the dressing room.

Slowly, he looked up and down the rows of beach clothing again. He mentally checked each group of clothing against what he knew of the person he was sure wore the clothing. It all fitted. He looked at each group in turn again. And stopped at the bathing suits of Anne Tozere.

A pale red bathing suit, pale red cap, and pale red robe. A white suit, white cap, and white Chinese silk robe. A pale blue bathing cap, pale blue robe—and light green bathing suit!

Shayne tugged on his left earlobe. Then he turned on his heel and strode out into the living room and up the circular stairs to the second floor. He walked back into the large bedroom that had been recently used. He found the bathing suits and caps in the bottom

drawer of the woman's bureau. He lifted them out.

There were four more suits, and five bathing caps! One of the caps was light green. None of the suits were pale blue. But one robe in the closet was light green, and there was one extra cap of light green—a green that matched the bathing suit on the hook downstairs.

Shayne stood back and formed a mental picture of Anne Tozere. The tall blonde would never wear a green bathing suit with a pale blue bathing cap.

Shayne left the bedroom, went downstairs again, and walked through the dressing room out onto the beach. The late afternoon sun was blazing on the white sand. To his right there was only open beach. But to the left a line of rocks reached out into the water like a jetty. Ripples in the water showed where other rocks lay hidden just beneath the surface. He trudged through the soft sand to the line of rocks.

He searched the rocks themselves, peering into every cranny and break between them. He searched the beach near the rocks. There were footprints, evidence of people having been here, but nothing else. Until he looked down into a space between the rocks about half way out on the jetty.

A tiny green object lay hidden among the rocks. He picked it out. It was the snap end of a woman's garter. It had obviously fallen off a girdle or garter belt.

Shayne had found where Roxie Van Allen had gone into the bay.

The current moved strongly here on the incoming tide, back in the direction of Miami.

Shayne left the rocks and began to examine the beach itself. In the tall grass between the beach and the road he found a faint trail. Not a real path, but broken grass and other traces of someone having walked through. He followed the trail back to the edge of the road. Someone had left the road at a point a few hundred yards from the Morgan beach house.

A glint of light caught his eye.

He was being watched from a window on the ground floor of the other big house nearby. Shayne walked along the road to the other house and knocked on the front door. The door opened almost at once. A thin, birdlike woman of about sixty stood there.

"You're a policeman, young man, I know it," the woman chirped. "I've been watching you. Is something wrong at the Morgan place?"

"I'm afraid so, Miss—?" Shayne began.

"Mrs. Warren. Mrs. August Warren. Mr. Warren was in real estate, rest his soul. I saw you go into the house. You took so long. Then I saw you on the beach. I just know you're a policeman!"

Shayne looked out the window.

There was a clear view all the way to the Morgan front door, and a full view of the road. To see the beach the woman would have to have gone to another room. Shayne smiled to himself. Mrs. Warren was a snooper. He turned back to the woman.

"Do you often watch the Morgan house?"

"Of course," the woman said. "My August watched birds, but I hate the dirty little beasts. Not that the Morgans are much fun to watch. Old Angus rarely comes now. That Alida brings her awful friends, young men with hardly anything on. Of course, Anne comes here often."

"What about Mr. Tozere?" Shayne asked.

"The husband? Not him. Of course, they were here the whole weekend two weekends ago. Not this past weekend—the one before."

"Saturday and Sunday?"

"And Monday, too. They left but they came back. I remember I was surprised."

"Mr. and Mrs. Tozere were here Monday night?" Shayne asked sharply. Anne Tozere had said that she had been in Palm Beach that night.

"Yes, they left in the early evening, as I said. But they came back quite a bit later. It was after eight o'clock, because I had fed my Teddy, that's my Peke. But it must have been before ten because I had not eaten yet myself. Mr. Warren liked to dine late."

"You were surprised to see them come back?"

"I certainly was, young man. Why, they'd been battling all weekend as usual. I expect they wished they hadn't come back."

"Why?"

"Another fight, I expect. I saw him drive off all by himself later."

"You mean Tozere left the house later?" Shayne said.

"But he came back. I've heard he won't leave her money no matter what," Mrs. Warren said.

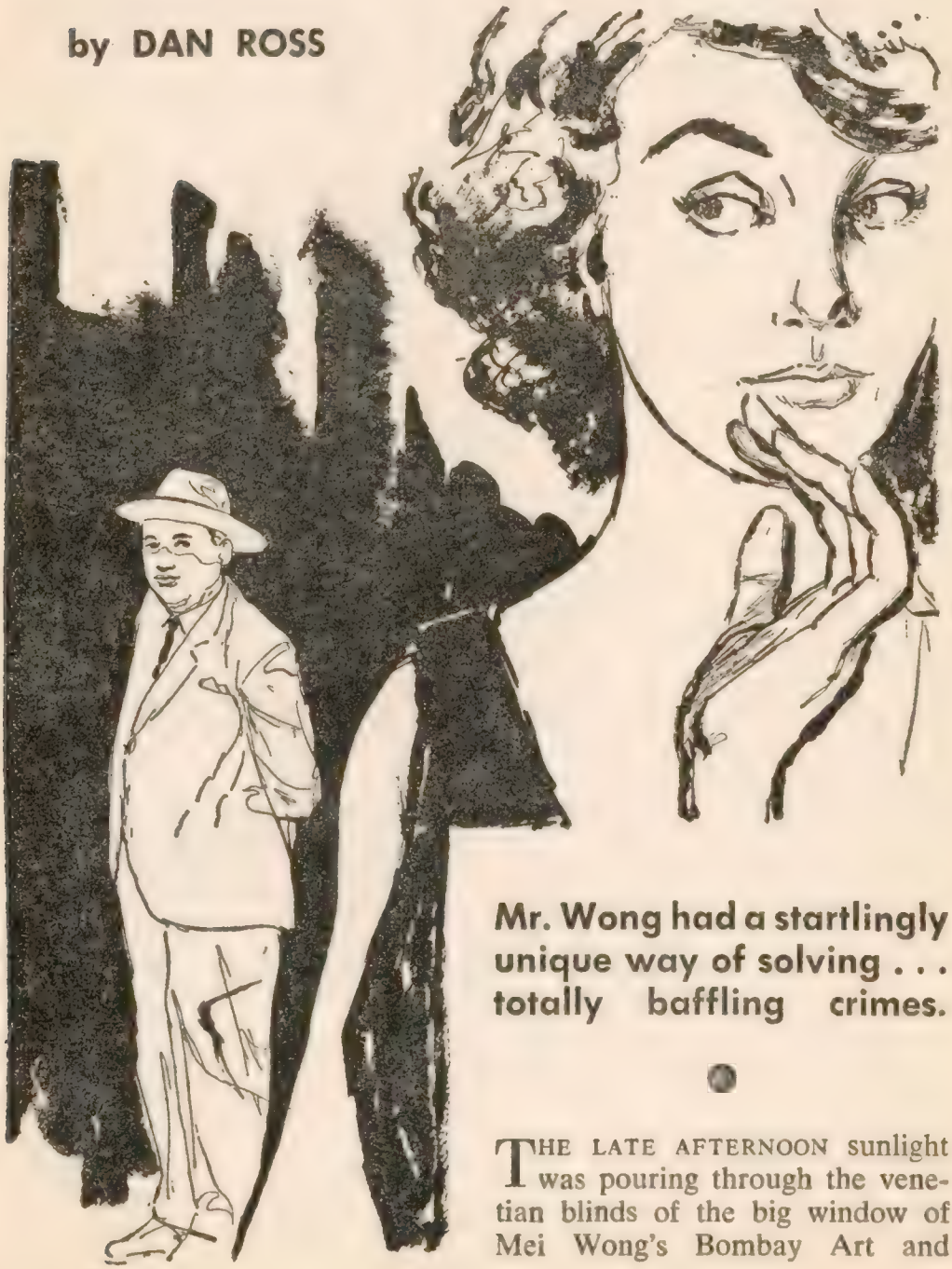
Shayne tugged on his ear. Tozere had left the beach house late that Monday night, and had come back still later. And according to Mrs. Warren he had been at the house with Anne who claimed to have been in Palm Beach. Had Anne changed her plans and come back? If so, had Roxie come to the beach house to look for Tozere and walked right into Anne?

He thanked Mrs. Warren and left. He walked along the road back toward the Morgan beach house. When he reached the spot where the faint trail led from the highway to the beach, he stopped. He studied the ground all around the spot. A car had been pulled off the road recently, but the soft sand left no definite tire marks. And the car could have been just some lovers looking for a lonely spot.

(Please turn to Page 127)

MR. WONG HAS DOUBTS

by DAN ROSS



Mr. Wong had a startlingly unique way of solving . . . totally baffling crimes.

THE LATE AFTERNOON sunlight was pouring through the venetian blinds of the big window of Mei Wong's Bombay Art and

Curio Shop overlooking the harbor. The venerable art dealer blinked slightly as he leaned across his broad mahogany desk to study the troubled faces of the two young people facing him.

One of them was Gilbert Carson, the son of a wealthy export dealer and client of Mei Wong's. He was a tall blond young man with a straightforward face. Beside him stood a girl of his own age, perhaps slightly younger. Her obviously heavy make-up made it impossible for Wong to guess her age accurately.

She wore a stylishly cut yellow dress that contrasted dramatically with her tanned arms and neck. She was pretty in a hard, flashy way with ash blonde hair. She had just been introduced to Mei Wong as Lillian Vane, heiress to an Australian ranch fortune, who'd been touring the Far East with headquarters in a Bombay apartment.

Mei Wong raised a hand and said, "Without hysteria please repeat what you have just told me, Miss Vane."

The girl swallowed hard and with a frightened glance at her companion said in a husky voice, "There's a murdered man in my apartment, Mr. Wong."

Carson took her arm and spoke imploringly. "You've got to help us, Mr. Wong. You're the only one who can."

The stout art dealer rose majestically from his chair and came around the desk to them, a broad Buddha-like figure in an immaculate white linen suit. He said, "Please be patient." And to the girl, "Why have you come to me? This matter should be reported to the police."

Her eyes showed fear. "I don't dare go to the police! They'll think I killed him."

Mei Wong's face was expressionless. "Why should they think that?"

"Because I was married to him once," Lillian Vane spoke quickly. "It's been over a long time. We were divorced two years ago. Since then he's hounded me. I told him if he didn't stop following me I'd kill him!" Her voice broke and she leaned against Gilbert Carson's shoulder and sobbed. "Now he's lying dead in my apartment!"

The young man did his best to comfort her and gave Mei Wong an appealing look. "You see the state she's in?"

The art dealer nodded. "Hysteria will not help, young lady," he said. "I must ask you again—why have you come to me?"

"I'm responsible for that," Carson said. "I explained that you had considerable experience in criminal cases of this sort. And you were my friend."

Mei Wong spread his hands. "I am your friend but I am not a police official—only a simple art dealer." He gestured toward the many showcases with their treasures of porcelain, jade and silver, the rich

tapestries that hung from the walls, the great brass dragon figures on their stands. "These are my interests and this is my place of business."

"Perhaps if you'd come to the apartment with us," Carson suggested, "you might find something that would help when we do call in the police."

Lillian Vane had recovered now and she appealed to Mei Wong with eyes red from her weeping. "Please, come to the apartment with us. Then we can notify the police."

Mei Wong hesitated. "What do you think went on there before you discovered the body?"

She shook her head. "I can't imagine. Unless he came after my jewelry. I have a very valuable diamond necklace. He knew about it. Some one else must have arrived at the apartment when he was there and shot him. He was slumped over the table in the kitchen and there was blood on his back where the bullet had entered." She closed her eyes momentarily as if to shut out the remembered sight.

The art dealer sighed. "Very well," he said. "I will go with you."

"There is one other thing," the girl said, and spoke almost apologetically. "I was so upset I rushed out of the apartment and left the front door key on the hall table. Now we're locked out and I don't have another key."

Mei Wong listened and inquired about the type of lock used on the door. When she described it he left them and went into the small room at the rear of his studio for a few minutes. Later he returned with a small piece of stiff celluloid and a ring of mixed keys.

"With the help of these," he said, "I think we will be able to get in."

He put on his broad Panama hat and led them out of the studio. A few minutes later they were in a taxi heading for Lillian Vane's apartment in another district of the great Indian metropolis.

They soon left the noisy streets and came to a long windy beach encircled by startlingly modern apartments facing the sea, pastel-hued in pinks and blues. There were swimming pools and many gay-colored umbrellas in evidence.

During the drive Gilbert Carson filled Mei Wong in on his friendship with Lillian Vane. He had met her at a local club where she'd been resting after an extended tour of India before going on to Hong Kong. In the fortnight they'd known each other the young man had become extremely fond of the vivacious blonde. Gradually she'd told him about herself, but had always refused to let him meet her at her apartment.

There had been something aloof and mysterious about her manner and they had met only at some appointed place in the city. Today when she'd come to him she had been near hysteria. When she'd told him about the murdered man he had brought her directly to Mei

Wong and now he was visiting the apartment for the first time.

After the taxi was dismissed Lillian Vane led them up two short flights of stairs to the door of her apartment. She was pale and nervous as she watched Mei Wong work at the lock. With a minimum amount of effort he slid the celluloid in the door slit and worked at the handle with patience. After a moment the lock clicked and he opened the door.

They entered the room with its drawn blinds and smell of stale air. Lillian Vane came behind Mei Wong with Gilbert Carson's arm around her. She pressed close to the young man, a frightened expression on her pretty face.

Mei Wong opened the kitchen door and there was no sign of anyone in the room.

"He's gone!" Lillian cried with a stifled shriek. "He was slumped over that table and there was blood on his back!"

Mei Wong said nothing but went further into the room and glanced around. He noted the chairs set neatly around; the table showing no signs of having been moved. There were no stains on the floor. He moved across to the kitchen counter where there were several items set out including a familiar bottle. He picked it up and brought it back to the two young people.

"It could be your blood, Miss Vane," he said grimly. "A rather theatrical touch. Some tomato ketchup on the back of your ex-husband's shirt. He probably worked out the scheme beforehand in case he was disturbed. Counting on your shocked reaction to give him time to get away. He heard your key in the lock and slumped across the table just before you walked into the apartment."

The blonde girl stared at the ketchup bottle in disbelief. "But why?"

Mei Wong shrugged. "I suggest that you check your jewelry. You mentioned a valuable necklace. Where do you keep it?"

"A wall safe in my bedroom," she said. "I'll look." She ran off toward the bedroom.

Gilbert Carson nodded to the old art dealer grimly. "The jewels will be gone, of course."

Mei Wong sighed. "It is quite possible. We should soon know. I see the theft of the necklace as the reason for all that happened."

Carson agreed. "As soon as Miss Vane left he got up and completed the robbery and went on his way." He paused. "What about the key she spoke of? Probably it's gone as well!"

Mei Wong went back to the hallway and confirmed the young man's surmise. "You are right," he said. "There is no key."

"That means he plans to come back and bother her some more," Carson said.

At this moment Lillian Vane came back from the bedroom, a

worried expression on her face. "I can't open the wall safe. I had a paper with the combination. He ransacked my dresser and found it." She seemed about to burst into tears. "He's taken it along with the jewels, I suppose."

Mei Wong and Carson exchanged glances. Then the young man said: "Can you do anything with the safe, Mei Wong?"

The old Chinaman hesitated for a long moment. "I'm not certain," he replied at last. "I do have some knowledge, but there are so many different types."

Lillian Vane gave him a pleading look. "Please try! As things stand I don't know whether I should call the police or not. If my jewelry is safe I doubt that I will. It would only bring me needless notoriety."

Mei Wong stolidly made his way into the adjoining bedroom. He tried the knob of the wall safe with his sensitive fingers. The others

watched as he moved it back and forth with great care. Then he paused and swung the small gray door open soundlessly, his face impassive.

"You're a wizard!" Carson smiled congratulations.

The old art dealer showed no expression of triumph. He shrugged. "Actually it is a very inferior safe. I would not trust my valuables to it for long, Miss Vane," he advised the blonde girl.

"I won't" she said as she came forward quickly and opened the inner door of the small safe and drew out an oblong tray covered with black velvet. She opened the tray and gave a cry of delight. "He didn't get them after all," she said. And turned to let them see the necklace and other jewels still in their case.

Mei Wong studied the necklace with its gleaming diamonds and appraised it as being worth a small

fortune. There were also other valuable items in the tray.

Gilbert Carson's face showed relief. "Well, at least you have that off your mind." He gave Mei Wong a nod. "Thanks to Mr. Wong."

Lillian Vane gave the old Chinaman a grateful smile. "You don't know how I appreciate this," she said.

Then she turned and closed the case and slid it back in the wall safe again. She shut the inner door and was about to swing the outer one closed when something happened that caught Wong's attention in a quite startling way and caused Lillian Vane and Carson to swing about as well.

A strange voice came from the doorway of the bedroom. "One moment, please!" Mei Wong turned to see the tall figure of Inspector Bannerjee of the Bombay Police. The turbaned, black-bearded official strode across the room to them.

He eyed Lillian Vane. "I am here because Mr. Wong phoned me before leaving his studio. What about this mysterious body?"

Carson stepped close to the blonde girl and answered for her. "There wasn't any. It was a hoax. Her ex-husband was trying to steal her jewels."

The Inspector studied the girl's pale face. "Was anything taken?" he asked.

She answered quickly. "Nothing. I don't wish to make a complaint."

The Inspector held out a bronzed hand. "May I see your pocketbook?"

She hesitated and then gave it to him. He opened it and checked its contents. Then with a knowing look: "I am disappointed, young lady."

Carson's face was crimson. "What is this all about?"

Before Inspector Bannerjee could reply Lillian Vane crossed to Mei Wong and flung an arm around his neck. "Please help me, Mr. Wong!" she cried.

Inspector Bannerjee smiled at the startled Mei Wong and the equally astounded Carson. He said: "Perhaps I should make myself clearer. I have made inquiries and find the real Miss Vane is presently in Hong Kong. This young lady is a jewel thief who has very cleverly used you both to help herself to Lillian Vane's jewelry."

"You can't prove that!" Carson fumed.

"I think so," the Inspector said quietly. He glanced at the blonde girl who now wore a crestfallen, frightened look as she stood beside Mei Wong. "I'm suspicious of one-armed embraces from young ladies with your dexterity," he said. And then to Mei Wong: "Would you kindly look in your right pocket and see what you find?"

Mei Wong's expression remained quite bland as he fished in the pocket of his white jacket and drew out Lillian Vane's fabulous necklace.

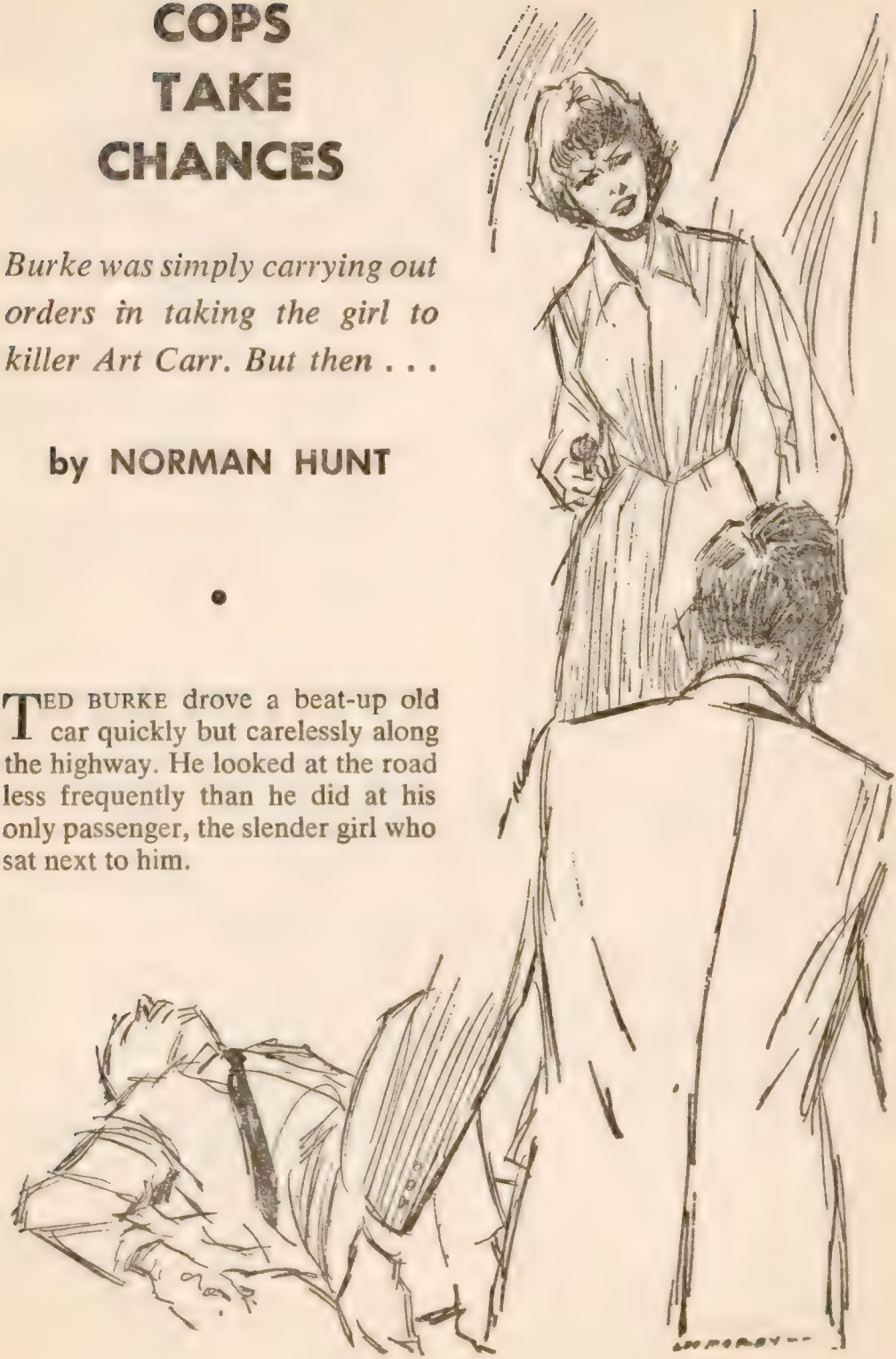
COPS TAKE CHANCES

Burke was simply carrying out orders in taking the girl to killer Art Carr. But then . . .

by NORMAN HUNT

•

TED BURKE drove a beat-up old car quickly but carelessly along the highway. He looked at the road less frequently than he did at his only passenger, the slender girl who sat next to him.



"Are we nearly there?" the girl asked.

"I'm not supposed to tell you a thing, baby," Ted Burke reminded her. "You know that. And I'm supposed to keep that handkerchief across your eyes, so you won't see where I'm taking you."

The girl touched her blindfold, but didn't move it. She was in her late twenties, with soft black hair tumbling down to her shoulders like a sheet of dark water cascading over the summit of Niagara Falls. The flower-pattern dress accented her black hair and the brightest lipstick Ted Burke had ever seen.

"When you get there," Burke was saying, "don't let Art Carr push you around. Art is never rough with women really—just with men. He's hiding out now because the cops say he knocked off a stoolpigeon called Tommy Flemming—well, anyhow, Art ordered me to bring you out here. I don't know why, though!"

"I'll handle Art." Her pink tongue darted swiftly over her lips.

Burke winced. "That lipstick you always wear almost hurts the eyes when I look at it," he said. Then he shook his head and added approvingly, "Otherwise, you've got it, Regina Warde. Real class."

They drove past the old-fashioned main street of the town of Mountburg and over a creaky wooden bridge. There was a small white-painted house some twenty feet from the bridge, and it looked like something out of another century.

Burke slammed the car door back of Reggie Warde when he helped her out. They walked to the house, her heavy purse hitting his side occasionally, and knocked twice on the heavy white door.

Art Carr opened it cautiously, then took the girl's hand and pulled her inside. He made no attempt to stop her from taking off the blindfold. Over one shoulder Carr called to Burke, "Wait outside until I'm finished with her."

"Okay," said Burke, and to the girl, wistfully, "S'long, honey."

Regina ran her tongue across the unusual shade of lipstick, making it still more shiny, and kissed Carr dutifully on the lips. As one of Carr's girl employees, she often gave him a friendly kiss by way of greeting. Carr pushed her roughly from him.

Ted Burke walked slowly back to the bridge, remembering how Regina Warde had been nice to *him* since she'd come to work at Art Carr's night club. She'd made it clear to him in small ways that she liked him better than she liked Art.

Now Art Carr seemed to be after her, too. Damn it! Why did he have to—

Burke suddenly raised one hand to stop the car that was coming over from the other side of the ramshackle wooden bridge. But the driver stopped on his own as soon

as he heard the unnerving creaking noise made by the swaying structure. Burke ran to the car, where a young man was sitting at the wheel. "Are you Detweiler?" he asked. Then, as the young fellow reached a hand to one pocket, he added hurriedly, "All right, I guess you're a police officer. You followed me. Art Carr is in that house, just like I told the detective in the precinct station he would be."

"Is the girl with him?" Detweiler asked.

"Of course," Burke said. "I was promised that Miss Warde wouldn't be harmed. That's why I co-operated with the police in the first place."

"I'll make sure she won't be harmed." Detweiler said grimly.

"Wait a second," Burke said. "Isn't there another detective on this job? I thought cops always work in pairs."

"We do." Detweiler held out a wallet with a badge pinned to it. "Everything's under control."

Burke followed Detweiler on the way to the door, but he decided to wait at the left side of the house near the cellar. It had grown darker since he had spotted Detweiler's car at the other end of the bridge, and only a dim swath of radiance from the electric lights which gleamed behind a closed window blind on the top floor of the house enabled him to see ahead. The living room light had been flicked out.

Detweiler hit the door with the barrel of a gun, the sound echoing in widening circles as if each blow was a stone flung into a pool. The door opened swiftly on Art Carr, who slammed a fist below Detweiler's belt and kicked the gun from his hand before taking out his own gun.

"Another cop, eh? You lousy snoop—get in here!"

Another cop? Before Burke could grasp the full significance of that Art pulled Detweiler inside by the hair and slammed the door shut after him. Detweiler let out a bull-throated roar. There was the unforgettable noise of metal hitting flesh.

Art Carr could be heard saying viciously, "Something . . . 'member me by."

Silence; and then Carr raised his voice for the first time. "Double-crossed me, Ted, huh? I'm going to kill one more stoolie tonight along with two cops."

Two cops? Before that, he'd said something about *another* cop. What in hell was Art jabbering about? Burke didn't have any intention of getting killed, and he

wasn't going to let Art Carr do any harm to Reggie Warde.

He drew out his .38 and promptly shot the lock off the door. A few feet of dimly-lit hall space waited for him on the other side. He was advancing into darkness, a hand against the nearest wall so that he wouldn't stumble too badly no matter what might be in his way. He was almost sure Detweiler was laying unconscious not far from him.

Then, abruptly, a door slammed shut behind him. The living room door, of course. Burke heard a key turning in the lock.

In the darkness, which was almost complete by now, he asked: "Where's Reggie? What did you do to her?"

"Damn skirt-chasing double-crosser!" Art Carr shouted. "You and your undercover cop girl friend!"

"Art, you're nuts! She's no—" In anger, Burke's hands crashed against the venetian blinds.

"She was planted in my night club by the cops and was snooping the day I had that shoot out with Tommy Flemming. She overheard what I said to him," Carr said. "She ducked back from the doorway of my office and put on an innocent act. But that's when I started asking questions about her, and got at the truth. I'll save her for last, after I kill my second stool pigeon—and that's you, Ted."

His shot sent shards of window glass down to where Burke had thrown himself flat, making himself less of a target. Burke steadied to hold his fire. He could make out a blur in the room, no bigger than an exclamation mark. But he couldn't be sure if it was Carr or the girl.

"I'm getting out as soon as I finish you," Carr yelled, the small bright blob moving up and down with his words. "I'll take your cop girl friend with me after I put a couple of goodbye bullets into your head and the guy who's with you. When I'm out of town I'll knock her off and leave her in a ditch. Doesn't that make you feel better, Ted? Or do you think you could stop me?"

Another shot. Burke, who'd been going to fire at the bright blob at last, was shocked. This bullet had come out of a gun smaller than his own or Carr's. It made a higher and shriller sound.

There was a deep-throated groan, and the small blob descended. Something struck the floor heavily.

From out of the darkness Regina Warde asked in an even tone, "Where's the switch? I turned it off before, but now I can't find it."

"Lef—left hand wall," Burke said. "Next to the door."

The light almost blinded Burke when it came on. When his vision cleared he saw Art Carr lying on the floor, his shoulder oozing blood. Carr groaned and sighed.

Regina Warde, a small gun in her hand, pointed it directly at Ted Burke. Her lipstick was still neon-bright as always, but somewhat smudged now. "Drop your gun," she said crisply. "Drop it, or I'll shoot!"

Detweiler rubbed his head and muttered approvingly," Good work, Sergeant." And, seeing Burke's stare he added, "Sergeant Warde is one of our best police-women, and she's been getting extra protection since we got the tip that Tommy Flemming gave away her undercover identity to Carr before he was killed. I'm sure you realize now, Burke, that I wasn't here alone."

"You're under arrest as an accessory for hiding a fugitive," Regina Warde told Burke. "As soon as Mr. Detweiler phones for an ambulance to take Carr out of here, we'll get you to the nearest precinct station."

"You might have wounded me or Detweiler instead of Carr," Burke growled. "It's lucky you hit Art Carr in the dark."

"Lucky, is right," she said, and smiled. "Lucky I wore very bright red lipstick to keep in character during the undercover job I was doing; and when I saw Carr tonight, I kissed him on his lips as usual. I didn't realize it might save my life. He thinks I heard him talking with Tommy Flemming and that I witnessed the shooting."

"So what about your bright lipstick?" Burke asked, bewildered.

"When I turned off the lights in this room his lips glowed in the dark and moved when he spoke. I shot just below the faint bright blob. He literally talked himself into the electric chair."

Next Month—A New JOE RODRIQUEZ Short Novel

THE GREAT HUNTINGTON HEIST

By TOM H. MORIARTY

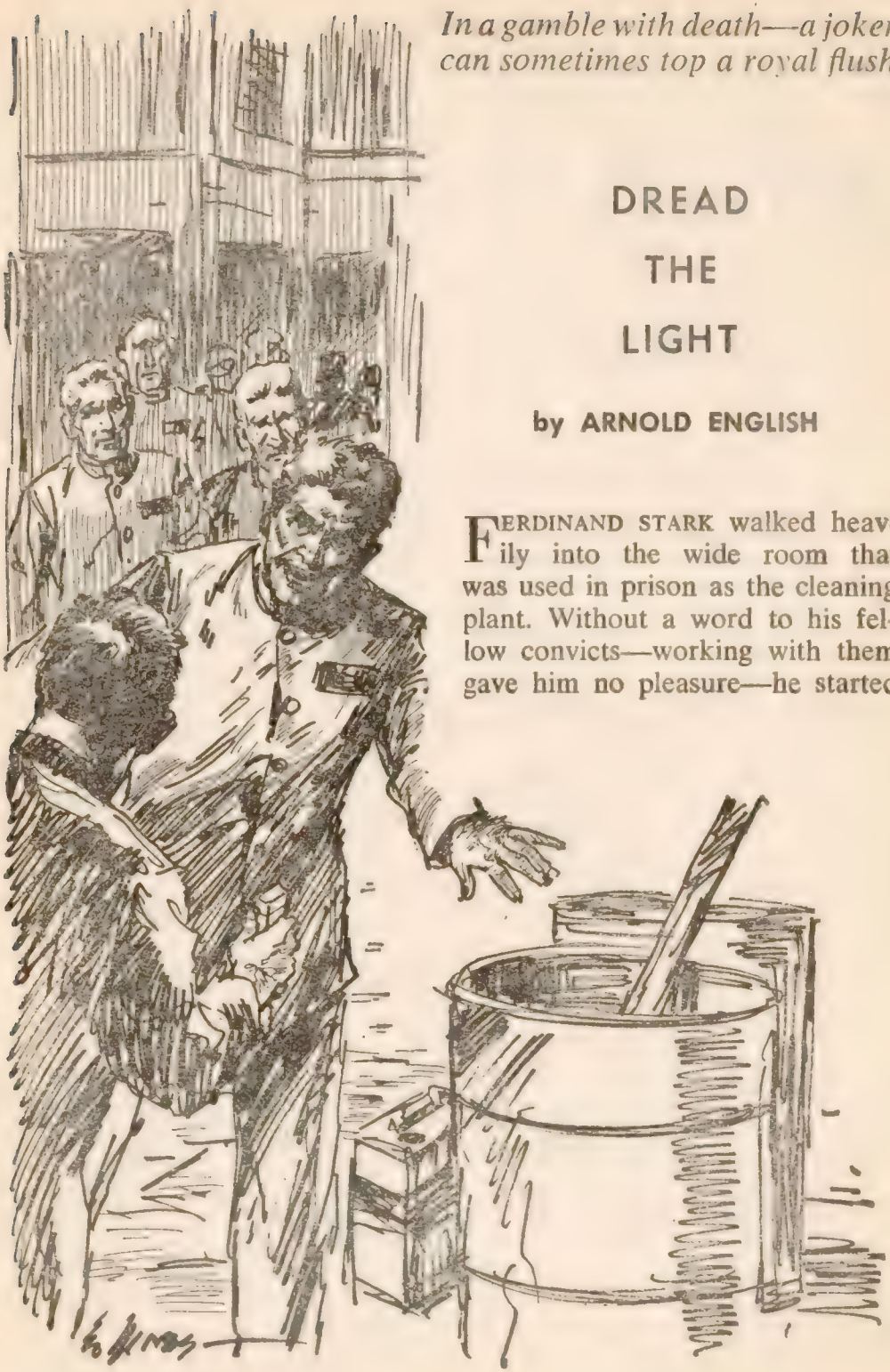
When priceless art treasures are on display the "Take me" label is always turned face downward. But thieves have X-ray eyes in that respect. A high-voltage crime thriller.

In a gamble with death—a joker can sometimes top a royal flush

DREAD THE LIGHT

by ARNOLD ENGLISH

FERDINAND STARK walked heavily into the wide room that was used in prison as the cleaning plant. Without a word to his fellow convicts—working with them gave him no pleasure—he started



shifting wooden barrels from one end of the room to the other.

Phil Oates watched critically for a couple of minutes, muscles rippling along his heavy bare arms. Then he walked over to the young guard who had just come in and was wrinkling his nose at the smell of sweaty clothing. Oates was a powerful man, both physically and in the prestige which his unofficial position of 'con bootlegger' had given him with the other inmates.

Oates said to the guard, "You've been paid to stay out of here for a while, right?"

"Yes, Phil, I sure have."

"Then do it, will you? Come back in an hour."

The guard left. Oates rubbed his hands exultantly. "Now we get started. Empty a barrel and rinse it out, Stark."

Stark went to work. Oates put some clothes on a 'dolly' and cleared them away. Then he brought out four gleaming metal cans, and set them down in a row.

"Don't bother to rinse that barrel," Oates said, turning his brawny back on Stark and pouring a pound of glittering powder from a dirty brown rag into the barrel. "If any of the cons get sick on account of it, that's their lookout. They don't give me any trouble, ever."

Stark gaped. "What do you mean?"

"You'll know soon enough. You look strong, so I arranged for you to help me here. You'll even get a small cut of the dough. Now shut up and get some more cans. Hurry it up, or the guards will give you a stretch in solitary, if I bribe 'em to."

Stark checked the comment that rose to his lips. He couldn't carry more than two cans at a time, and he was out of breath long before he had brought the last pair over to Oates.

He nearly skinned one wet palm before finding the opening catch on the underside of the can. At the powerful smell of the liquid inside he looked gray.

"It smells like—like—" Stark couldn't easily bring himself to say it, "like the fluid I use in a cigarette lighter."

"What did you expect—Bourbon?"

"Are you selling this poisonous-smelling stuff for cons to drink? You can't be serious! This must be the vile stuff you've been peddling to my kid brother."

"Shut up and do what I say, or you might not last for too long," Oates said, flexing his muscles again. "I'm liable to lose patience and have you rubbed out at some time when I've got an alibi."

Stark said quickly, "You've got to understand that Larry's always been an alcoholic. He won't know whether—"

"To hell with your kid brother," Oates said irritably. "You made

your big mistake when you tried to save him from prison by admitting to the robbery he'd done with you. Is it my fault you're both here? If you're smart you'll forget the big brother act and make some money while drawing circles around dates on the calendar. I told you I'm willing to give you a small cut."

It didn't seem long before the barrel was almost filled up with the contents of the twelve metal cans.

Oates stirred the mess vigorously with a wooden plank before drawing it, a cup at a time, into the cans. He then mopped the floor in several places where slight spills had caused snake-track shapes to form. Stark helped as little as he had to.

The door opened on an old inmate before Oates had finished. The man came shambling in, hardly able to put one foot in front of another. Pop Hendrick was doing a life sentence, and had been in the place for fifty years. He had been taken off work details a long time ago, and his biggest problem nowadays was to keep track of the false teeth the state had issued him, and which he generally mislaid.

"Fill 'er up," the old con said, extending the empty eight-ounce bottle he carried in one shaky hand.

Stark watched wide-eyed while Oates filled the bottle. "Don't you know what this stuff is made out of?" he couldn't help asking.

"Sure, but it tastes a lot better than what they give us in the dining room," Pop Hendricks said, unscrewing the cap, and raising the bottle to his lips.

It was too much for Stark to take. Impulsively jettisoning all caution, he knocked the bottle out of the old man's hands. Other cons were filing softly into the room now, each carrying a bottle.

Oates whirled on Stark. "The only way to live in prison is by looking out for yourself and being smarter than the next man," he said, his face livid with rage. "Being meaner, too. That's why you're going to have a drink you won't like much."

Stark took a quick step backward, but Phil Oates was on him before he could retreat further, gripping him by the shoulders, and forcing him to his knees. Savagely pinioned as he was, he couldn't move his head when he saw an opened bottle slightly tilted towards him.

He spat out the first few drops, but powerful fingers closed down hard over his nostrils, cutting off his breath. He had to inhale, *had* to . . .

"Finished every drop," Oates said, laughing derisively and pushing him away.

Some of the men in the room joined in the laughter. Stark stood with his hands over his stomach,

gasping at the bad taste of the 'liquor' he'd been forced to drink.

Oates stopped laughing and turned to the other convicts. "Some of you guys will take cans full of the stuff to pass around, but the rest of you are getting bottles for yourselves. All of you men, get on line!"

Stark suddenly called out, "Larry, don't buy this stuff!"

Larry Stark, who looked a good deal like his older brother, said to him, "You know I've always liked a drink now and then."

"But not this," Stark said in the suddenly quiet room. "You know how it'd hurt you even if it was genuine liquor. But this is worse. Do you know what's in it?"

Larry said uncomfortably, "I've heard about that."

"Well, let me tell you—"

Oates whirled on Stark again. "Knock it off, and let's get finished here."

Stark disregarded him. "There's a little powder of some kind in it and the rest of it is cigarette lighter fluid. This so-called liquor is the same stuff I use when I have to refill my lighter. Oates here is getting rich by stealing the prison's supplies and selling poison for rummies like you to drink!"

"Quiet, I tell you!" Oates snarled, and advanced on Stark with his arm drawn back. But this time Ferdinand Stark held his ground.

"I'm not going to let my kid brother poison himself," he said.

"You can't stop him."

"I've just thought of a way," Stark said.

He suddenly drew out a cigarette lighter. The men in the room looked at the gleaming lighter and, as if with one step, they fell back.

Oates breathed, "You'll kill us. You're nuts."

"My kid brother will get away because he's on the other side of the room, close to the door," Stark said. "If I just flick this thing against one of those cans, Oates, I'd make myself a bonfire. But I'd finish you while I'm saving Larry's life. Don't move. Stay where you are."

"Maybe we can talk this over," Oates said with an oddly mocking calm. "Just what are you after?"

"You're never going to sell liquor to my kid brother again, directly or otherwise," Stark said. "In fact, if you ever try to use this place again to help poison other cons I'll destroy every drop of the stuff!"

Oates looked around him at the cleaning plant and gave an exaggerated sigh. "Well, if you get your way, Stark, I guess this batch will have to last for a long time."

"No it won't," Stark said. "I want you to junk every one of these cans."

"Whatever you say. But before I get around to that I'm going to beat the daylights out of you Stark."

"Try it now and Larry will help me take care of you. He can't get favors from you any more," Stark told him. "And in an hour or so, there'll be a letter smuggled out past the gates on its way to my lawyer. That letter will have a detailed enclosure telling what happened here, and a note to say that the enclosure isn't to be opened unless I or my brother are hurt in prison. So you won't be getting even with anybody, Oates. Not unless you want more trouble for yourself."

Oates' face changed. "You goddam—"

"I was just taking your advice and being a little smarter than the next man."

Stark playfully clicked his cigarette lighter. There was a gasp, but no flame appeared. He did it again and again, with the same result.

"This thing hasn't worked for the last six months, Oates," he said. "I haven't been able to get any fluid for it since I've been in prison."

FOR FASTER SERVICE—USE ZIP CODE NUMBERS! REMEMBER, ZIP NUMBERS ARE PART OF YOUR ADDRESS! AVOID LAST MINUTE RUSH! MAIL EARLY IN THE DAY! IT'S FASTER THAT WAY!

A MATTER OF GUILT

by T. C. McCLARY

It was very hard for Carew to think of himself as a murderer. So he skillfully erased his guilt.

GEORGE CAREW lounged away the last Sunday of the summer in the shade of the so-called sundeck, inducing apathy with the aid of Scotch-and-soda—his last defense against boredom with his wife.

He could still hear her rapid, sharp voice, of course, so superior and critical of everything he said or did. But if he got fuzzy enough, it never seemed to matter so much. He could accept his hundred thousand dollar prison, and eternal jailer with bleak fatalism.

He might, for instance, have been playing golf with Ted Watson, or indolently relaxing over at the club pool with the Johnstons, who took life easy, or racing his sailboat against Moyer, who sailed the same class.

But though his isolation was self-inflicted, it was the opposite of illogical. Actually, he had friends and money enough to enjoy most of life's benefits. But if he was out, there was always *the time when he would have to be home,* and Claire had a genius for picking a time that completely demolished whatever prospects of enjoyment he might otherwise have had.

And his home was not the kind

of a home where he could invite his kind of friends. Somehow, there was something just a little wrong with his friends, and without a word of rudeness, Claire could throw the chill of the Arctic over them. So, little by little, he had simply stopped seeing them except in town, where his office was his sanctuary.

"Really," Claire remarked from the wicker recliner across the deck, while she held her finger on an eight-hundred-and-fifty dollar dress illustrated in Vogue, "I don't ask very much of you, considering the home and background I provide. I don't nag you by constantly reminding you that my Cadillac will be three years old this fall, or complain because you find the Bunny clubs necessary for business conferences. But I do think you might catch an earlier train than the seven o'clock on nights when we have social invitations."

He said wearily, "Claire, half the time you're already wherever the shindig's going to be. What difference does it make if I'm on time or late? Your crowd don't even know whether I'm there or not."

"Well!" she said with a hard breath. "It still doesn't look very well for me to be unescorted!"

"Then get a gigolo!" he almost barked. It was an outrageous suggestion, but if she had followed it he would have been grateful. Not precisely a gigolo, but one of the random young bachelors, and she was still good-looking enough to attract men much younger than herself.

But the bachelors along the beach already had Claire pegged. She was too absorbed with herself even to engage in a worthwhile flirtation. When she danced, it was only to show off her new dress and her own grace.

A local newscast broke into the Sunday background music, which never varied, although he would have enjoyed hearing the ball game. Jay Oliver had been apprehended in Mexico and would be returned to face charges for the murder of his wife Beth, who had been one of the fringe members of Claire's particular clique.

Claire snatched off her sunglasses to give her husband a quick look before he could mask his reaction. "I suppose you think it's too bad for Jay?" She made it an accusing statement, and not a question.

Carew reached the bottle and refreshed his drink. "I think she damned well asked for it," he said. "She needled him into it. Why didn't she give him a divorce? He was willing to pay for it."

"Why should she?" Claire asked huffily. "No sum pays for the damage to a woman's position after she's thirty." She eyed him very directly. "But I might have known you'd try to defend him. No doubt you think he should go scott free,

because all he did was murder her."

She got up and moved inside to telephone Gail Sommers about the news. "Really, the whole thing was exasperating," he heard her say. "I told Beth over and over she was letting Jay get completely out of hand."

Carew snorted and drained his glass and mixed another. "Out of hand," he thought. "Like a husband was a damned hunting dog!"

He fell into a reverie, not of shocked morals, but of wonderment. Where had Jay, a timid man, found the guts? He himself would never have been able to commit so dreadful a crime even if he had felt sure of getting away with it. There were times when he half wished he could, but there was that damnable streak of Puritan guilt in him.

It was an odd guilt, too. It would not be over the act itself so much—although he detested blood and gore—as over his responsibility for it. He recalled that during the war, it had never bothered him unduly that his outfit's artillery had annihilated whole battalions of enemy soldiers. But he had never gotten over the guilt he'd experienced when he'd killed his first enemy soldier in hand-to-hand combat. It was not death that appalled him. It was that finger of conscience that would accuse him of direct responsibility and premeditation.

But suppose you had an enemy who was going to jump off a bridge or building and you did nothing to stop him?

The thought, for some reason, made him think of his wife standing on a bridge, and he smiled at the picture. But it was like smiling at the dream of fifty million dollars. There was no chance that Claire might ever want to destroy herself.

Carew half-turned his head to listen to her prattle on the phone. Burying their pangs of grief and remorse over a departed friend, the two women were exchanging scuttlebutt about what to wear, and who would be giving which parties at next week's regatta.

When Claire returned to the sundeck she was in a state of high excitement. "Gail said that everybody who has a kid will be out in boats following the small fry race. What a chance that will give me to circle the race on water skiis."

"Good heavens, Claire, that course will be over rough water," he growled. "You're no teen-age kid out for kicks any more. Why must you constantly seek to draw attention to yourself?"

"I don't know that I like that at all," she retorted, frowning. "I'm certainly not so old that I can't still water ski. And I see nothing juvenile about exhibiting a skill, if you have one."

"You're being preposterous," he said. "You haven't water-skied more than a few hundred yards for years, and that was inside the

breakwater on a quiet day. Even if the weather's perfect, there'll be short choppy seas running outside. Even the small boats take a slapping."

"Oh, so that's it?" she demanded, with a note of contempt. "You're getting so soft you're afraid of the shaking up. You've got a speedboat that does fifty, and people run from Florida to the Bahamas in motor boats half as large. But you're afraid of the slap just outside our breakwater."

"That's silly," he bridled. "I made the open run to Cape Cod two years ago. But that boat has to be driven at high speed, and even circling the race once would be a run of two or three miles. Besides, you're not in training. Why take so dangerous a risk?"

She sniffed disdainfully. "I'm in training enough. What do you think I do to pass the time all week while you're in town?"

He knew the answer to that. She played bridge and drank too many cocktails. But he didn't say so. She was seeing a big chance to show off her still youthful body and agility to all the top crust and no argument was going to penetrate. Not even if he told her that a spill in bumpy water at the speed they'd have to travel would knock her cold and she'd sink like a rock if he couldn't turn back in time to grab her.

He gave one more try, though. "Claire, once we start a run like that, there's no turning back. I can't stop to pull you aboard in front of the race or the flotilla if the strain gets you."

"Well, it won't," she said. "A couple of my pep pills and a drink before we start, and I could follow that race right out to the turn buoy."

The pep pills would give her the vitality she'd need. He was sure of that. Her life was a constant succession of dexedrine and the barbituates that relaxed the pepup, and put her to sleep. They both looked alike in sustained-release capsule form and she invariably got mixed up in directing him where to find the right ones, because she kept them in two different places. More often than not she sent him to bring her the pills, even if she had just come downstairs herself, solely to give herself the satisfaction of ordering him about.

She would say, "Bring two of the ones in the bedside table," when the ones she wanted were in the bathroom cabinet. The two times he had followed her directions precisely, the results had been disastrous after she'd had a drink. She lost all mental and physical coordination. She wallowed around like a ship that had lost its rudder. And if there should be any mixup on the day of the regatta—

"You be sure to remember now," she was commanding him. "I'll be at wits' end getting dressed and deciding who we'll have to a beach supper afterward. You'll have to

carry a flask, because I don't want those pills until just before the race. I'm only supposed to take two, but I'll take three of the pep pills in the bedtable and a double martini from your flask."

Claire looked at him doubtfully. "Will you be sure to remember, George?"

"Oh, I'll remember," Carew nodded faithfully. "In fact, I'll go put the pills in the boat right now and put the flask on my bureau where I can't miss it."

She was already checking off friends on her fingertips as he went upstairs to get the pills. "Three," she had said, "from the bedside table. And yes—do it now before you forget."

As usual, she'd gotten her directions switched. Three of those barbituates and a double martini, and she'd be flailing like a torn sail in a squall. Well, he was simply following her orders. There'd be nothing to disturb his conscience.

Next Month's Complete Mike Shayne Novelet

PRESSURE PLAY

by BRETT HALLIDAY

The kidnapping didn't have the look of a ransom-motivated snatch and the murder angle seemed weirdly out of focus. But the redhead had the feeling that the missing pieces could be fitted very neatly together—if he walked a tightrope and made himself a target for killers until the last one fell into place.

PROTOCOL FOR A CROOK

AN EBULLIENTLY
SATIRICAL CRIME
NOVELET

The diamond thieves were clever. But Lacey had an old score to settle and that can keep a man on his toes.

A New NICK LACEY Story

by

PETER KENNEDY

MONSIEUR JEAN MURNET pursed his well-manicured hands with something akin to rapture. He estimated that the preview crowd thronging his elite galleries already represented over five billion dollars, plus the very cream of the Social Register.

It was possible, he considered, that tomorrow he might achieve the great ambition of his life—to rack up an auction more historical than the time Crittenden of London auctioned the Russian Imperial jewels.

The big draw, of course, was the Star of Krishnu, reposing in solitary, blazing glory amidst carefully selected flowers in the central showcase. Innumerable VIPs were finding absolutely preposterous excuses to examine it in the raw, as it were, as if an intervening pane of glass and a few inches distance was breaking some form of mystic osmosis that would trans-

fer the gem's brilliance and glamor to themselves.

It was a nuisance to let them inspect it, but it was also a triumph of publicity. Those who were privileged to breathe upon its gleaming surface would make it the main topic of conversation through Gotham's wealthiest drawing rooms for many days to come.

The risk of such inspection had already been countered by the gallery's precautions. A guard, in some cases two, stood by every showcase with strict orders to watch even the breathing rhythms of those preferred guests who, armed with magnifying glasses, were to be permitted to view the stones when the cases were opened.

The guest list itself had been screened finer than a presidential reception. A royal personage could not have *"crashed"* the viewing without one of the priceless invitations in hand. Each invitation, as well as being delivered by a trusted messenger, was cunningly marked to prevent forgeries or duplication. And, each display was wired so that the slightest tampering would trigger an alarm.

In addition, there was Police Detective Lacey and his special jewel squad whose combined knowledge encompassed, it was said, every known jewel thief of consequence in the world. Nick Lacey himself bore an aura of mystery about him, contriving, incredibly, to melt into the crowd unnoticeably in spite of being the only gentleman present wearing a bowler hat.

"Why in creation does he wear such a freak head-piece in his line?" Roberts, the gallery's young top assistant, asked.

"Probably because it is his line," Monsieur Murnet said, pausing midway in his reply to bow to one of the better known Whitneys. "At one time, he wore only the finest Italian hats, but in the apprehending of a thief, he had his head split open by a loaded cane. His present hat is a camouflaged trench helmet. It is lined with steel."

"Good heavens, I thought jewel thieves took extreme pride in their dignity and aplomb and never resorted to the physical," Roberts said.

"Ah, so they do—up to a point. But it is the play acting of a woman's flirtation," Monsieur Murnet smiled.

He dropped his voice abruptly to ask, "Who is this redheaded Amazon bearing down on me like a battleship?"

"A Mrs. Birdie Sparrow of Tulsa," Roberts said instantly. "Her invitation was at the request of Mrs. Jerome Appley. She is listed at over two-hundred-million."

M. Murnet's frown changed to an expression of charmed delight. Such financial figures were symphonic.

"My dear Madame Sparrow,"

he intoned. "How gracious of you to enhance our little preview!"

"Say, Mon-seer Murnet," she simpered with an accent that made M. Murnet cringe to his marrow, "you're a real jet pilot when it comes to the fast line, aren't you?"

She gave him a flirtatious elbow in the tummy that tested his wind, balance, and dignity all at once. "What I want to ask," she went on, "is . . . if I picked up that little old diamond, what color dress would I wear it with?"

M. Murnet adroitly noted that she wore blue. The most blatant, blaring, god-awful blue that had ever been dyed—but the $25,000 sables she wore atop the dress did much to mitigate its offensiveness.

"Madame," he said suavely, studying her face, which actually was rather attractive under the layers of makeup. "With your eyes, there could only be one color —a brilliant, royal, peacock blue."

"Why, my favorite color!" she purred with the subtlety of a puma. "How did you ever guess, Monseer Murnet? You know, I might just buy that Krishnu thing and have it recut to something modern. Could I see it for an itsy-bitsy minute?"

"But of course!" M. Murnet agreed, heroicly containing his shiver of horror. "Roberts, clear the way and escort Madame—*Sparrow*—to the Star of Krishnu. As one of our most privileged guests, she must, of course, examine its flawlessness without the impediment of glass."

She giggled at him, somewhat the way a mustang mare would whinney, he imagined, and actually frisked her heels a little as she went off on Roberts' arm. M. Murnet was still mopping his brow with a scented handkerchief as the Chesterfieldian gentleman with eagle-like black eyes, imposing brows, and beautiful curly grey hair approached.

"Hah, Murnet!" he gusted with the democratic manner of the ultra-aristocrat. "You'll remember—I'm Chartresham."

Jean Murnet had not been able to recall the face, but he knew the name. He also knew that Lord Chartresham possessed one of the most selective gem collections in the world.

"Of course, your lordship," the auctioneer greeted. "This is a rare

privilege. I did not know you were in the States."

"I thought I might save myself a few thousand quid if you didn't get advance notice," Chartresham replied, chuckling. "I phoned your secretary for the bid and told her not to bother you. I explained that I would see you here."

"It will be the Star of Krishnu, of course?"

"Not at all. England's held the curse long enough. You Americans keep it for a time. But I *am* interested in the Tears of Kashmir."

"The rose grey pearls of dawn!" M. Murnet breathed with honest emotion. "There we have nature's truest treasure—the only jewel that cannot conceivably be duplicated."

"Diamonds!" His lordship wrinkled his nose. "Between you and me, I think they could make better ones in a chemical furnace today. But a pearl of rarity—ah, if man were only as dedicated as the oyster!"

"May I escort you to inspect the string?" M. Murnet offered.

Chartresham reminded Murnet of a hunting dog suddenly catching scent. The man almost quivered with anticipation. "I may borrow your glass?"

"With pleasure." Murnet produced a jeweler's glass as he led the way to an adjoining gallery where the Tears of Kashmir reposed in lustrous splendor within a table-shaped case of crystal glass.

Murnet made a gesture of importance to the guard. "Lord Chartresham will inspect the Tears," he told him. "See that he is not crowded by the—ah—"

"Rabble," Chartresham interposed blythly, and removed his hat, as his eyes feasted on the historic pearls.

The guard nodded discreetly and opened the case. His lordship bent down into it, holding the jeweler's glass to his eye with one hand, and his hat against the upraised glass top with the other. He made sounds of appreciation that had no words.

"My dear Murnet—" he murmured with emotion.

THE AIRS WERE split with a sudden clamor. The alarm in the main room jangled through the dignified atmosphere. Instinctively, the guard pivoted and half-started toward the main room, then recollected himself and froze at his post. But he continued to stare at the doorway. M. Murnet turned white and started in that direction.

The alarm went on clanging. But through it came the unmistakable voice of Mrs. Birdie Sparrow. "But I only want to hold it against this dress a second! One itsy-bitsy second. How can I see what it looks like on me if it's in a *showcase?*"

M. Murnet subsided into a state of mere homicidal exasperation.

Even in this room, he could catch the picture. He recalled his more immediate need for courtesy and turned back to Lord Chartresham. His lordship had dropped his glass and hat into the showcase in the excitement, but was not retrieving them. The pearls had been knocked a little asunder and M. Murnet stepped forward to rearrange them, frowning heavily as he did so.

Automatically, he noted that the Tears of Kashmir were quite in order, but he was thinking far more of some suitable torture for Mrs. Birdie Sparrow.

He re-closed the case and ordered the guard, "You can lock it now and check us out."

He looked at his lordship. "Perhaps you would care to wait here while I attend to that—that—ugh!"

His lordship chuckled. "There is always one ungovernable lady, eh! But no, I won't tarry, I'm late at the consulate, Murnet. Only I don't suppose I can get out until that clanging stops. What do you think?"

"A matter of a moment," Murnet said. "If you will wait at the front door, we'll have them opened immediately."

Escorting his lordship in that direction, he called to one of Nick Lacey's men, "His lordship was with me."

The detective nodded and spoke a pleasant word as Chartresham came up and waited for the doors to be released from their automatic lock.

Most of the crowd had fallen back from the Star of Krishnu as if it were an Irrawaddy cobra. But Mrs. Birdie Sparrow still stood there, red-faced and indignant because she had been prevented from lifting the jewel out of its case. The jewel was askew but still in place, and the case was closed now. Roberts was expostulating with her as diplomatically as possible and Detective Lacey stood stiffly at her side with a slightly austere frown.

M. Murnet moved through with his rapid steps, reopened the case, lifted the jewel to scrutinize it expertly, wiped it clear of a slight smudge from the plump hand of Mrs. Birdie Sparrow, and shut the case and saw it locked. He gave an eye signal to Roberts to cool her off and get her out. Then he nodded at Lacey.

Lacey said, "For the sake of formality, we better have an item check."

"I'll turn off the alarm," Murnet said and moved rapidly out of sight.

Shortly, the jangling alarm stopped and there was an outbreak of relief and buzz of excitement.

M. Murnet returned and clapped his hands. The rooms fell silent and Lacey sang out authoritatively, "Sound off."

The guards began calling in their numbers in rotation, ending

with the guard post covering the Star of Krishnu. M. Murnet let out a breath of exasperation, but managed a smile and "thank you" to his guests. He then moved with Lacey to the back quarters where it would require both of them to decontrol the electric locks, and reset the alarm.

On their return, he paused to pour them a small drink at his private bar. "I think we're entitled to a stiff one," he said. "That stupid woman! I am sure Roberts must have explained she must not touch the gem."

"Pretty hard to explain anything to that kind," Lacey said. "It's a good thing diamonds don't break easily. She clutched it like an eagle would grab a baby sheep for its starving young."

Murnet toasted and took his drink. "Well, it provides a little excitement that will make good publicity." He half-laughed. "If it doesn't keep her from coming to the auction tomorrow."

Lacey frowned. "You're sure that was the same stone? You're sure of her?"

"She came with Mrs. Jerome Appley. And the very highest financial references," Murnet said. "There was no switch. I have dealt with that gem through three owners. I would know an imitation in the dark."

"Well, so far so good," Lacey said. "But let's hope no more such incidents. Frankly, there's too much temptation in this collection, carefully as the guest list was screened. I won't feel happy until this sale is over."

"I also will feel better. But what just happened seems to prove our security is impregnable."

"Unh," Lacey grunted noncommittally.

They finished their drinks and went back to the gallery. The doors had been reopened. Late guests were still arriving, while those who'd been there were standing about in excited little knots, laughing. Roberts came to meet them rather disconsolately.

"I'm afraid Mrs. Sparrow caught some of the laughter," he said. "She left in rather a huff. She said she could try on anything she wanted at Tiffany's, and she didn't know why she had to come here to be made a fool of."

"Fool! Why didn't you take her in for champagne?"

"She wouldn't wait. But I did tell her that not even the Queen of England possesses a gem as famous as that, and she left thinking about that. She asked if the queen wore blue gowns."

"So, she may yet come to the auction. Did Mrs. Jerome Appley leave too?"

"No, she is in the cocktail room, waiting to explain to you that Mrs. Sparrow is not an intimate friend, but simply a visitor she was asked to sponsor in a letter of introduction."

JEAN MURNET and Detective Nick Lacey clearly remembered that information at the auction next day. The Star of Krishnu had sold for an unheard of sum, but not to Mrs. Birdie Sparrow, who had not attended the auction. The Tears of Kashmir also sold for an unheard of sum, but not to Lord Chartresham, who had failed to appear in spite of his urgent interest.

M. Murnet was rubbing his hands with satisfaction when Senor Albo Parroli of Brazil, who had purchased the Tears of Kashmir, asked if he could see him in his private office. With aggressive stiffness, he simply thrust out the opened box holding the pearls.

M. Murnet looked at them with puzzlement which changed rapidly to foreboding as he carried them to his examination lamp. They were not paste, they were something new that he was not familiar with. But they were certainly imitations.

M. Murnet then saw the method of theft in all its blazing mockery. He, himself, M. Murnet, who had never been duped, had been made a party to the burglary of his own gallery and a primary tool as well.

"He even stole my own jeweler's glass!" he sputtered.

Lacey heard the details for the first time. What had happened was clear. The Star of Krishnu, as the outstanding gem of the collection, had been used as a decoy to gain their attention for the brief

time it required "Lord Chartresham" to maneuver the sleight. The thief had correctly anticipated M. Murnet's reaction to the alarm, and that he would be so preoccupied with the Star of Krishnu and the delicate social situation in the adjoining gallery that he would not have his full faculties concentrated on the switched pearls when he looked back at them. It was a good bet that Lord Chartresham had carried the imitations in his curly grey hair, making the switch almost instantaneous.

It took less than two hours for the Tulsa police to verify that the real Mrs. Birdie Sparrow was still in Tulsa. She had not left the city at any time for four months. And, she said testily, no highbinding jewel gyps were getting any of her money while millions of helpless cats throughout the world were underfed and homeless.

On the heels of that report came Scotland Yard's disclosure that the real Lord Chartresham had been

in traction in the hospital for six days following a riding mishap. He also stated that he possessed no relatives who might have been mistaken for him, or who would know the Tears of Kashmir from Christmas ornaments in any case.

Meantime, Nicholas Lacey had been going over the MO's and ID's of known jewel thieves which had been rushed up from headquarters. Finally he came back to the first file he'd jerked out and stood glaring at it with eyes going hard as the diamonds that had been auctioned.

"Look at the planning—the inside knowledge!" M. Murnet was still sputtering disbelievingly. "How would he know I did not know Lord Chartresham? Or how to forge his invitation? Or that we would accept Mrs. Jerome Appley's sponsorship of a supposed visitor from Tulsa? Or that you would not recognize him, Lacey?"

Lacey's eyes sparked angrily. He ran his hand up under his hat to feel the old ridge where his head had been split. "I recognize him now all right," he rasped. "Earl Teagarten—the crook who damned near scrambled my brains! This whole deal has his signature."

M. Murnet looked incredulous. "The thief nobody knows! The man of a thousand faces—or no face. But you know what he looks like. And now I have seen him."

Lacey grunted a dry laugh. "Murnet, this man is a master of optical illusion as well as makeup. He started life in a carnival side show where his gimmick was extending or contracting his body six inches taller or four shorter than normal. And he's a mimic so realistic in his impersonations that on one occasion he sat next to a lady through a whole dinner and theatre party without her being aware that he was not her husband."

"You mean, our identification would mean nothing?"

"Almost nothing for we may never see him in either guise again."

He handed Teagarten's file to his finger print man. "Do any prints on that showcase match these?" he asked.

The print expert nodded. "Quadrants. Enough. There at the top, where he held his hat."

"Then that's what we've got to go on. And about all we've got," Lacey snapped.

M. Murnet went ashen. "We have to get those pearls back, Lacey! The insurance people will never settle the full sum when I was implicated myself in the switch!"

"We'll get them, and I'll nail him but good," Lacey growled grimly. "I've got some personal interest in this too." He removed his hat long enough to run his hand over his head.

NICK LACEY stood the commissioner's personal scourging with

grim silence. He might have informed the commissioner that there were two entirely different types of disguise. One, the theatrical type, was *laid on* with careful attention being paid to considerations of lights and distance, like a woman's makeup. The other involved a control of facial expressions, voice, movement and vitality, although it might be aided by a set of over-teeth to alter the line of cheek, mouth and jaw, a little dope to give different color and brightness to the eyes, and a wig. Control of height such as Teagarten could achieve also made an enormous difference.

But had he explained, the commissioner would have snorted that he'd been watching too much TV.

In any case, disguise was not the entire reason Lacey had goofed, and he knew it. The fact was that he had been unconsciously counting on each guest coming up to the Star of Krishnu case where he could inspect them closely, and the so-called Lord Chartresham had not gone near that gem.

Whether Lacey would have pierced the disguise in any event was doubtful. After all, it was not done with makeup, which could be detected.

However, he vowed to his chief, Leighton Jones, "I'm going to get this Joe and throw the book at him. We have his fingerprints, he was the last one the case was opened for, and I have the M.O."

"Yeah!" Chief Jones snorted. "Too bad you weren't so smart while he was pulling the job. But now you know how he sleighted that switch so fast!"

"Yes, I do. He was wearing a wig, and the imitations matched and were in his hair. He was bent right over the spot so that the switch was almost instantaneous. Also, Murnet and the guard were both concentrated on looking into the Star of Krishnu room."

"You must have read the Journal," the chief grunted sourly. "But if you catch him, you've made yourself a twenty thousand dollar reward for your goof at the gallery. But I'm not leaving it to you, Lacey. I'm putting out a dragnet."

"You're not giving me a chance?" Lacey barked hotly as he tore off his hat and tilted his head to show the old ridge. "Haven't I earned it?"

"You've still got your chance, and you better make good if you want to stay on the jewel squad," Chief Jones said. "But, I'm still putting out the dragnet. Give me your ID for description on this Joe."

Lacey snorted mockingly. "How do you describe a contortionist mimic with a ten-inch spread of stature, whose real face, voice, posture, walk, you were not sure that you'd ever seen?"

"Make it specific," Jones added, warningly.

Angrily, Nick Lacey sat down

and described in precise detail the Earl Teagarten who had split his head fifteen years before. He added the specific information with biting ire—"Jewel and art expert. Likes luxury living."

Lacey left Chief Leighton Jones' office in a dark blue funk. With twenty thousand dollars rewards stacked up, the dragnet was going to tear the city apart. It would wind up nowhere, but would muddy the water plenty. Crooks of Teagarten's level didn't get picked up in dragnets. But they felt them, and if there was one sure way to drive them underground or out of town, that was it.

Still, he considered after he simmered down, it might work out at that. Teagarten's sort didn't sell to fences. First, the risk of a trace was too great. Second, the normal cut was preposterously high. And third, in the case of historic gems, much of the value was destroyed by breaking the stones up. In the case of a string of pearls such as the Tears of Kashmir, at least half of the value lay not in the individual pearls, but in the matching, which might never again be duplicated.

So, Teagarten would have some unscrupulous private collector in mind, some rich nut willing to buy stolen property and hide it away for his grandchildren. When it came to art and gems, a cop learned just how much larceny there was in the leaders of society. Presidents and kings had closed their eyes to the origin of art and gems.

Teagarten's man would be somebody prominent, and that kind would wait a spell to make sure that the police weren't sitting on the thief's tail, and then would meet him somewhere in wide open public, as if by chance. Probably in a plush bar or restaurant, where, if anything went sour, the client could use the excuse that he had merely joined a casual bar acquaintance for a drink.

But—and this was important—the client was not going to wish to linger long in any case. It would be necessary for Teagarten to have the pearls readily available for examination and transaction. But he would not dare cache them with a dragnet out. They might be discovered, or he might be cut off from reaching them at the crucial moment. At the same time, he would not dare carry them in such a way that a standard police frisk would expose them.

And that left him only one thing to do. He would have to carry them with him at all times, and the only way he could do so safely was in the same manner that he had stolen them—secreted in his hair. That meant he would probably wear a grey wig for Teagarten's hair was coal black.

Lacey gave a cop's hard, tight smile as he thought of that. If he failed to nail him, it was going to

set the detective's career back badly, and with retirement right over the horizon. But Lacey wasn't going to fail. And luck, he thought, favored him that first week as he lounged in the Chantilly over a stinger.

The two hi-fashion chicks three tables away might also be hi-society or high priced call girls, or both —not so unusual these days. They were obviously waiting for somebody and were gushing chitchat.

Suddenly the blonde one said, "Claire, if you want another martini, for heaven's sake, order quickly. Earl doesn't approve of ladies having anything stronger than an aperitif."

Lacey sharpened at the man's name and bent an ear. The other girl laughed at something.

The blonde said, "No, he's not really a square. Actually, there's a dark and romantic side of him. For instance, he's a real expert on art and gems, but he gets furious if anyone mentions it. Oh—you're too late for your martini."

A bluffly distinguished looking man with handsome grey hair was coming toward them. His face seemed a little more blunt and he looked heavier of shoulder than Lacey pictured Teagarten, but both those items might be accounted for.

He stooped to kiss the blonde girl, was introduced to the other, and with a laugh, kissed her. Their conversation was too low and buzzing for Lacey to catch, but ultimately, Earl took out his wallet and thumbed off what were probably five one-hundred dollar banknotes and gave them to the blonde. They had some more chitchat and laughter. Then the girls got up, kissed Earl endearingly, and left.

Earl looked after them, clear to the doorway, smiling, and he was not smiling like an uncle.

After a moment, he finished his drink and went to the men's room. Nick Lacey spilled a little of his own drink down his shirt for aroma and followed. In the men's room, he acted the maudlin drunk, pretending that in his cups he'd discovered an old buddy buddy. He grabbed the man's shoulder, and finally his hair, which he yanked, anticipating that it would come loose in his hand.

It did not come loose, but the man's irritation did. Lacey had the impression of doing a sudden cartwheel before he wound up flat on his back on the floor. The man grunted a rough laugh, washed his hands, combed his hair, and left.

Lacey had just picked himself up when the manager came back and stood regarding him with twinkling humor. "Don't you know who that was?" he asked.

"No, but I'd like to," Lacey growled.

"That's Colonel Earl S. T. Sturgess, the Pittsburgh blueblood athletic nut who set up the combat judo course for the Marine Corps."

NICK LACEY'S determination found him fresh trouble the following week. He struck up a conversation with an older man at a bar and felt sure that this time, he'd hit his mark. The man was a conversational fencer, and suspiciously evasive in answering leading questions. Also, there was a cool mockery behind his eyes and voice.

His hair was perfectly groomed and glossy grey and wavy, and finally, Lacey spotted the exciting proof that it was a well made wig. When the man went to the washroom, Lacey accompanied him.

"So, we meet again, Teagarten?" Lacey said.

The man looked at him with mild amusement. "Afraid you have your faces mixed."

"I don't think so," Lacey growled. "But you can save yourself some trouble by showing your identification."

"Oh? I can save *myself* some trouble?" the man asked, and he was no longer amused. "And who might you be to demand that?"

Lacey's foot was in it. The police had no such authority, and he could not say he was police. He did some fast double talk intimating that he was CIA. This was strictly forbidden, but it usually worked and it was an unadmitted police practice in a pinch.

The man looked at him searchingly, and snapped a question. It was clearly a code question and Lacey didn't have the answer. The man snorted and simply turned on his heel and left Lacey smarting. He smarted harder the next day when Chief Jones put him on the carpet. The man he had broached was an executive of the CIA.

"And obviously, one helluva lot better at identification than you are!" Jones added cuttingly.

"He was the spitting double of the so-called Lord Chartresham," Lacey muttered.

"Why wouldn't he be? It's the State Department type, isn't it? Now you listen, Lacey, you're on borrowed time around here in a big way. One more blooper and you're going to be pounding the swamps in uniform."

Lacey returned to his quest, stewing in a sense of bitter injustice. Actually, why didn't the po-

lice have the authority to demand identification and ask questions? The French and German police did. How were you expected to screen suspects without it? And probably, during all this travail, he himself was spotted and supplying enormous laughter to the crook he sought.

The third week he picked up no trails that did not immediately peter out for one reason or another. By the fourth week, he could feel the chill Arctic breeze blowing his way at headquarters. They'd probably let him ride the month out, he thought darkly, and then pull him off the case. They might even transfer him out of the jewel squad entirely.

He was feeling gloomy and bitter and depressed, seeing his whole reputation, career and lifetime knocked into a cocked hat by a crook who was making a fool out of him fifteen years after nearly ending his life. He was in no mood for gaiety at all, and kept on the trail this night more from habit than desire. Out of that mood, he picked the most staid and saddest of the spa's he knew, albeit it was famous for its chef.

But he was in no gourmet mood either, and he just sat there in the ultra-subdued atmosphere, wallowing in bitter frustration, and not even paying much attention to the other diners. The one lone diner with grey hair was a man he saw around a good deal whom he had long since screened out as a possibility.

The man was everything Teagarten would not be—dumpy, stolid, dull looking, and, above everything else, awkward of movement with his hands. Tonight, he even dropped his jewelled cigarette lighter. It was characteristic that he did not even have the class to signal a waiter to pick it up, but bent over from his seat, awkwardly groping for it himself.

Nick Lacy watched him automatically, not even thinking about him, really, regarding him simply as a useless chip tossing on the churned-up surface of his own stormy feelings. But something penetrated Lacey's gloomy contemplations as the man bent down. Something was wrong. Something so infinitesimal that it made no clearcut impression, yet the sense of it persisted.

Then Lacey felt as if he had been banged with the whole load of a tetanus injection. As the man bent, there had been a fleck of light from the man's head. The barest spot of it, but still, a flicker—and the man wore no pomade, nor was it the toss of a lock of hair.

Lacey found his breathing suddenly fast, his heart hammering as if he were a rookie. He had to wait to control himself, and then find a spot from which he could examine the man with a scope, fitted with an ultra-violet filter. And there were the pearls, clear under the filter,

probably pinned in, arranged beautifully through and under the waves of the man's hair.

Lacey moved straight to the table. Teagarten showed his aplomb by getting up and gesturing Lacey to a seat as if they were old friends.

Lacey shook his head. "We won't need to sit down again, Earl. You're wearing the evidence, so this is opened and closed."

"Let's not make a scene, at least," Teagarten murmured. "Have a cognac and let me pay and walk out without attention."

Lacey barked a harsh, rasping laugh. "Protocol for a crook, huh? I know a better protocol."

His hand darted out and ripped wig and pearls together from Teagarten's short crewcut head. The next instant, he had slapped handcuffs on the jewel thief. Teagarten's eyes filled with a shine of angry outrage.

"That," he accused Lacey, "was unnecessary."

Lacey touched his own head. "So was this."

"No," Teagarten said, "That was a getaway fight. It was you or me. But ruining my reputation in a favorite restaurant is totally uncalled for."

"Turn in a complaint," Lacey jeered.

Teagarten looked at him with gimlet eyes. "Feeling pretty smart now, aren't you? You've evened an old score. You'll get a lot of publicity. You figure to make twenty thousand dollars on this. You'll be a big shot."

"I've earned it on interest alone," Lacey crowed.

Teagarten's face filled with wicked humor. "You know something?" he said mockingly, "this arrest may just be your finish. I wouldn't be surprised but what they put you back to patrolling the swamps after I get through with you."

Lacey laughed. He was feeling good. And best of all, he had the complete evidence and "hideaway", that wig with the pearls pinned in.

NICK LACEY took him down to headquarters to book him, but first he wanted a statement. He took him up to the squad room, and the light in his eyes was not good-natured. He pushed Teagarten down in a chair and sent for a cop steno, and he stood menacingly regarding him while he felt that old ridge under his own hair.

While the steno was coming, Chief Leighton Jones lounged in to get a look at this super crook. He took a fast look at the pent up explosiveness of Lacey's face first.

"You don't deny you're Earl Teagarten?" he grunted at the crook.

"Why should I deny it?" Teagarten asked.

"You stole the Tears of Kashmir from the Murnet Galleries the day before the auction?"

"Stole is such a harsh word," Teagarten sighed. "The pearls seemed to deserve a more appropriate home than they were likely to find among the oil neauveau riche. Let us say, I was simply transferring them to a more appreciative owner."

"Say it any way you want," Jones growled, "as long as you say it." He pivoted and stared at Nick Lacey a long moment. "Well, I suppose it was personal, but you still earned your twenty grand rewards, Lacey. The commish will like this. You did okay."

Teagarten cocked his head and his eyes narrowed a little as he studied Lacey's half angry, half cocky expression. Suddenly he said, "Why will he get the rewards, chief, when I am turning myself in?"

"Hunh?" the chief exploded.

Teagarten made a bland gesture. "Why do you think I'm here or that Lacey's got the evidence otherwise? Do I look like the man he described for your dragnet? Or does my record suggest the stupid kind of thief who walks around with his loot on him, and then waits for some lightweight detective to pick him up?"

"What are you getting at?" the chief rasped.

"Why, the dragnet got too bothersome. And I'm tired of being harried. So, I contacted Lacey here to bring me in and supplied the evidence in order to cop a plea."

Jones glared at Lacey who looked dumbfounded. "Chief, I spotted him and picked him up cold! I've got witnesses!"

"It was a cross," Teagarten said with quiet disdain. "He wanted to make it look that way. He offered to split the reward with me, chief. But obviously, I know who Nick Lacey is, and I would not have sat at a table waiting to be arrested without making a break or attempting to unload the evidence, unless it was already agreed."

"I'll leave that to the D.A. to decide," Chief Jones said, but he looked at Lacey with eyes like twin automatics.

Then the uniformed steno came in and the chief moved around the desk and took the chair of the interrogator. "I'll just take this statement myself, Lacey," he bit out on a hard note. "You go into my office and wait."

Teagarten gave Lacey a sardonic smile. "You should have accepted the courtesy of that cognac, Lacey. I suspect you are going to need it."

With full restitution of stolen property, and an avowed voluntary surrender, Teagarten expected to cop a plea of a year and a day. The D.A. would have been agreeable. But Lacey had not become top man on the jewel squad without making a few friends where it counted. He was able to itemize quite a few million dollars of unsolved jewel thefts which had certainly been the work of Teagar-

ten, and the insurance companies put on the pressure.

To his astonishment, Teagarten drew five to ten years. To a man of his luxury loving, opulent habits, the sentence was like a burial.

"Well, he fixed Lacey and it looks like Lacey fixed him, and the department and citizenry are both better off," Jones said.

"Nuts," Lieutenant Stokes grunted as opinion. "I think Lacey got a lousy deal. This crook half kills him at the start of his career, and now he's seen to it that Lacey winds up in disgrace. If I were Lacey—"

The chief waited and then asked, "Well?"

Stokes jerked his thumbs upright. "Well, maybe he'll have time to nail him yet. On good behaviour, Teagarten will be out in three and a half."

Teagarten made sure to be on good behavior. At the very least of his suffering, he wanted access to that prison kitchen. Within six months he was a trusty, in charge of a laundry detail, but with relative freedom to move about. It almost seemed as if he had friends secretly working for him among the wardens, but of course, he could understand that. It wasn't often that even Sing Sing was honored with a criminal artist of his caliber.

Still, he chafed badly at the restriction, and especially at the food and the companions he was forced to have. Also, he considered it a blemish upon his pride that he was there at all. In nearly thirty years of highest echelon theft and burglary, this was his first conviction, and his vanity smoldered under it. It was simply incredible that a man of his wit and talents should be a prisoner among common thugs and felons. He had no intention of serving his time, short as it would be. It was vital that he break out of here, if for no other reason than to show his superiority to the law.

Then, of a sudden, the visitor arrived, listing himself as "brother," a relative Teagarten did not possess. He did not recognize the visitor, nor did the man supply him any clue as to who had sent him. Seemingly, he had come for the sole purpose of recounting jokes, at which he laughed enormously, rocking back and forth with merriment across the narrow visitor's shelf.

But on one of these lunges, he popped a tightly rolled strip of airmail paper through the grill, and after a final joke took his departure.

Teagarten carried the message to his cell and found it in code, but managed to decipher it with rising excitement. Even though unsigned, it was evidence that he had friends outside. Perhaps his girl, the erstwhile Mrs. Birdie Sparrow, had arranged things. Even better, perhaps it was some unknown Don

opportunities within the prison.

The plan was simple. On one day each month, remnants of hopelessly torn clothing and blankets was bagged in the laundry and sent out on a waste truck. The back door of the truck was locked with a special padlock on the outside, but there was a small package door in the truck's side panel that would be unlocked and could be opened from the inside.

The plan was that Teagarten would find his own means to secrete himself within the truck, and be ready to roll free through the side panel at the long curve below Ossining. From there to New York, he would be on his own wits, but in New York, he would find clothes and money in an apartment on Grove Street. Thereafter, he would find an apartment on Forty-fifth

Mafia recognizing the need for his genius.

In whatever case, it was a smooth setup to break him out. Every detail seemed to have been provided for, and with full knowledge of his own position and

Street all provided for him, in a block where the daily business and theatre crowds were heavy.

He was to hole up there until contacted by friends at eight o'clock some evening.

Teagarten read the code three times to impress every word upon his mind, then tore it into teeny pieces to swallow. To his surprise and pleasure, it turned out to be rice paper that dissolved in his mouth. Whoever was interested in helping him was a man of his own caliber.

A break was subject to risk, of course, he considered. It would mean the serving of the maximum sentence for penalty if he were ever caught and returned. But that in itself was an extra inducement. Why, he would live right under noses of the police just to flout them!

Teagarten went over every detail of the plan and each time liked it better. Even at the outset, while it was still in process of evolvement, a chunk of chewing gum properly placed would change the shape of his mouth. A different set to his shoulders, a manner of posture and a new walk would make him appear a different man.

When he reached the right clothes and makeup to do a decent job—and this was the most beautiful part of the setup!—the only cop in American who might penetrate his disguise was Nicholas Lacey. And they had busted Nick Lacey off the jewel squad and put him out in the Long Island swamps somewhere. He wouldn't even be on the scene to possibly spot Teagarten!

Once decided, Teagarten set his plans immediately. In the laundry, he gathered an outfit of the clothes worn by outside trusty gangs, not unlike GI dress. He included some blanket scraps to give him more shoulder and chest. A few stitches in a work hat took the prison look out of it.

At the month's end shipping of remnants, he was in charge of the work detail loading up the bags. For this, he was very definitely dressed in prison garb and he made sure that the guard noticed it.

He looked over the dwindling pile of bags and made a gesture at his gang. "Catch this other batch inside the door and let her roll," he told the men. To the guard he said, "I've got to hit the head."

"Go ahead," the guard said. "You're good as checked out now."

Teagarten caught the expression with sharp alarm, but the guard meant nothing beyond the fact that the work was almost done. Teagarten slipped around the door and pulled a prearranged bag around him, pulling the mouth closed from within. A moment later, he heard the slither of the last bags being jerked out to the loading platform, and his own bag was grabbed and dragged and slung into the truck.

There was that always tense last

moment then when anything could go wrong. Seconds dragged like hours as the guard looked into the truck. Then there was the bang of doors and the little drift of light through the mouth of the bag went dark. The padlock rattled through its staples and snapped locked. The guard banged the back of the truck.

"Take it away!" he called and moved to the platform phone to signal the gates that it was coming.

It was still mid-morning. Teagarten, being a trusty, would not be missed until noon checkup. The truck stopped at the gates. There was a clang as the truck passed through, and finally the heavy metallic clap of the great steel doors slammed behind them.

Teagarten forced open the mouth of his bag and sucked a deep breath of air. In his whole life, no other air had ever smelled as sweet.

He changed clothes out of the supply in his bag, found and tested the side door in the dark. Before long, he felt the truck making a long turn and the truck slowed. The driver whanged the front panel with the flat of his hand. Teagarten opened the side door and half jumped, half rolled out and down an incline.

A moment later, he was within the cover of brush inspecting himself for damage and general getup. A few scrapes were the most serious damage and they fitted his new role of construction stiff after he smeared some dirt into his face and hands.

He went back up onto the highway stepping out boldly. Open trucks rumbling by told him that there was a construction job somewhere nearby. A quarter mile beyond the bend, he found a filling station with an *Eats* and side bar. Stoking away ham 'n eggs, potatoes and flapjacks were three gaunt-eyed welders who'd worked a straight eighteen hours. They were too tired to give close attention to anything except getting home to the city. He told them he'd been laid off and didn't want to wait for the bus and they offered him a ride with the brevity of a grunt.

He was in New York before the prison knew that he was missing. The apartment door on Grove Street was off the latch. Inside, he found slacks and a sport jacket and other requirements. There was a roll of bills inside the salad bag with a head of lettuce in the refrigerator.

He showered off the prison stink and shaved while brewing coffee. He stepped out into Greenich Village, still semi-deserted at this relatively early time of day, and was on a bus headed uptown before the heavy squad of plain clothesmen who covered this area had hit the streets.

On Forty-fifth, he melted into the scuttling, heavy lunchtime

crowd, and slipped into his appointed doorway as into a slit trench. The designated apartment here was three flights up, and contained everything he might need, including more clothing. His unknown benefactors had really gone all out. There was a professional makeup kit in the bedroom, and somebody had purchased and installed a new three panel mirror and bright makeup light in the bathroom.

Teagarten's disguises, however, was of a more simple nature. They involved change of expression—of impression—more than actual disguise. The mouth and nostril wax and flesh-tinted tape from the kit he could use. Most of what else he needed was a haircut at a particular barber's, some eyedrops, and a pair of tweezers to alter the shape of his eyebrows.

The radio in this apartment brought in the police band. He caught the first alarm of his escape broadcast before he left to see a barber. Two hours later, he had struck up a casual bar talk with a detective who was looking for him, but from a far different description than the way Teagarten now looked.

THE FIRST THREE days were a heaven of release. Teagarten kept humming to himself, chuckling suddenly as he came across items of his escape or past in the papers. But although he was at his apartment meticulously from seven-thirty to ten each night, there was no manner of contact from his mysterious collaborators, and that began to puzzle him.

He could make no major move until he found out what was in store, and by the following week, he was getting bored and nervous. Also, he had tried to communicate with his girl, who was hiding out in Mexico, and learned the disturbing fact that she was registered at the hotel she was supposed to be at, but had not been seen for several days.

That meant, almost certainly, that she was off on a ringding, probably with some young and handsome caballero. The item did nothing to better his mood. There were certain things in life which could not be feigned or disguised, he'd found, and one of them was the hotblooded, laughing vitality of youth.

The thought turned him sour and he began to hear sounds in the hallways which weren't there, or if they were there, meant nothing more than the passage of other tenants or the creaking of an old house. But then, waiting the tenth night for the contact that had not been made, he knew definitely that somebody in the outer hall had paused at his door to listen.

He was feeling sparky enough to leap out of his chair, but he moved silently to the kitchen for a knife, and then to the front door to

look through the one-way spy hole. Nobody was in the hall, but he opened the door very silently and stepped out to listen at the stairwell.

He peered down, using the old polished banisters as a reflector, but caught no shadows, no shifts of

light, upon the gleaming surfaces. If there was anybody in the lower halls, they were standing motionless.

He frowned and chewed at his underlip for a moment, puzzled on the one hand and irritated on the other if his nerves were playing unnerving tricks on him. A tenant on the floor below came out, banging his door. He went down stairs with an even, hurried rhythm that told Teagarten he had passed nobody on the way down. So, that left one floor above him.

He felt sure nobody was up there, but he went up anyway, taking three steps at a time and moving with catlike silence. The hallway was empty, and this made him madder than if he had walked into an ambush. His nerves were getting him, and that was something he could not tolerate.

He returned to his own apartment, thinking of his girl but angered at himself. As he moved through his own hallway, he vaguely noticed a slight change of atmosphere, a drift of chill air, as if a window had been opened. But then, he'd had the hall door open for a full four or five minutes, so that was probably that. Nothing tonight added up right anyway.

"I think I better have a drink and take a look at the town," he muttered to himself, and knew he was talking to himself, and that irritated him further.

He stepped out of his hall into his living room, and suddenly flung up his head, this time knowing his senses were not playing tricks—somebody else was in that apartment. He tensed on the ball of his foot to thrust himself in a long step forward, but too late. There was a blur of movement beside him, and his coat cuff was grabbed in the police twist.

Teagarten knew who it was even as he pivotted. "Lacey, you ugly son!" he grated. He snapped his arm up and down violently to free it, and then speared with his knife.

The fight was violent but brief. Nick Lacey sat atop Teagarten's

shoulders nursing a slashed wrist but chuckling as he dialed Chief Jones. He had disarmed Teagarten and had him shackled with handcuffs. Lacey's voice sounded as if he were singing as he lilted into the phone, "Chief, guess who?"

"Lacey, if you're drunk, I'm going to suspend you!" Jones barked.

"Well, I am going to be," Lacey conceded. "But I meant, guess who I'm sitting on top of?"

"Not—" The chief's snorting breath followed.

"None other," Lacey said. "Our great sleight artist and jail breaker. Quite unrecognizable, but I don't mean bloody."

"You've got a double beef on this boy," Jones barked, "but don't try taking it out with fist. I'm coming up to bring him in myself."

"A crook like this gets the most special protocol," Lacey singsonged, then his voice turned into a harsh bark. "All he did was try to kill me once and wreck my career with lies the last time."

"Forget it," Chief Jones grunted. "I'm putting you back on the jewel squad, and you'll get a medal for catching a breaker."

Lacey hung up, a tough smile twisting across his face.

"But what in hell did you frame me for?" Teagarten demanded. "You can't get the award now anyway. What's in it for you?"

Lacey looked at his fist and kissed it. "Something even better than this. You'll be serving your full ten years now, m'lad. Plenty of time for your girl to get back from Mexico and hit some of those old-age caches you've got around. And that is vengeance that tastes sweet."

"She won't dare come back!" Teagarten jeered.

"Oh, I don't know why not. You see, we're dropping the complicity charges against her as soon as you're back in the pen."

"What for?"

"Well, she thinks very highly of your talent. So much that she got high celebrating your escape and boasted about you'd crossed me up. But it just happened that she boasted to a very handsome detective of the Mexican police, so she had her choice of an arrest-and-hold until we got there, or of signing a statement, which she did."

"Lacey, you're lower than a thief!" Teagarten snarled.

Nick Lacey bowed at the compliment. "Perhaps just more talented," he said, and grinned broadly.

THE ONLY MAGAZINE featuring MIKE SHAYNE every month

3 BACK COPIES FOR ONLY $1

You May Have Missed
These Three Mike Shayne Stories

If you've just discovered MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE you may not have read any of the previously published issues. And if you are a real dyed-in-the-wool Shayne fan—and who isn't?—you'll want to read them. We have a limited supply left of some of these back copies and they are yours—by filling out the conveniently printed coupon. Each issue also contains—besides a new Mike Shayne adventure—short stories, novelets and short novels by prominent writers in the mystery, crime and detective story field.

No. 1 . . . NOT ENOUGH CLUES by Brett Halliday (January 1962)
The Bikini-clad blonde had the look of an angel. It was hard for the big redhead to realize that she was quite dead . . . a victim of brutal violence. But Shayne's problem lay elsewhere—no clues.

No. 2 . . . CORPSE IN THE SHOWCASE by Brett Halliday (February 1962)
The big department store seemed to have almost as many murder suspects as cash customers. So Mike Shayne had no choice—but to concentrate exclusively on the dark-suited corpse in the window.

No. 3 . . . MURDER STRIKES OUT by Brett Halliday (March 1962)
Mike Shayne and Lucy Hamilton go to the ball game. But when Murder elbows its way into America's national game a seventh-inning stretch is dramatically ruled out by Miami's famed private eye.

RENOWN PUBLICATIONS, INC.
160 West 46th St., New York, N. Y. 10036

Please send me the three back copies of MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE I enclose $1.00 in full payment. Remit by check, money order, or cash.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY, STATE, ZIP NO. .....

Please print SEPT. 1965

The Strange Case of Peddler Phelps

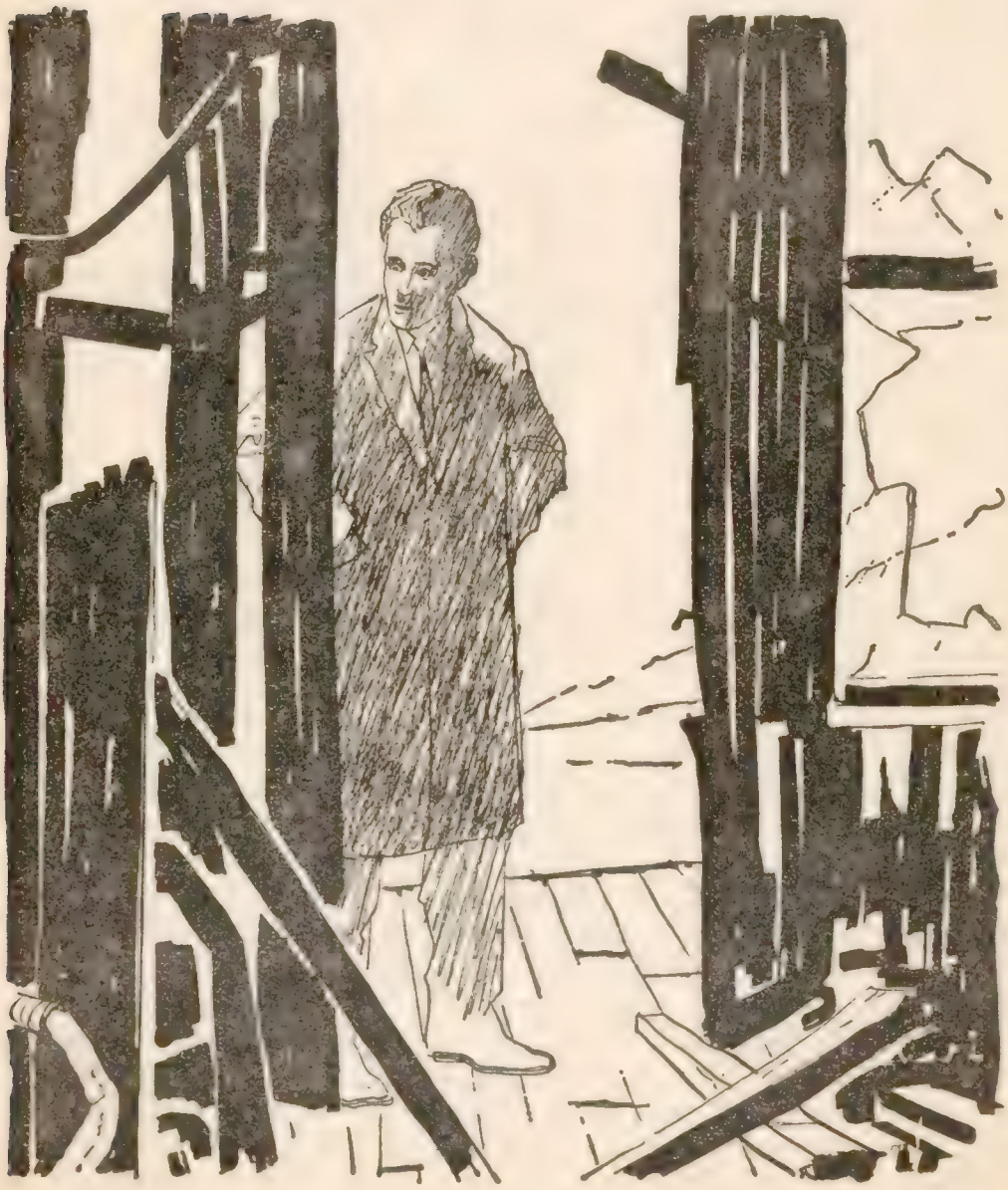
A NEW LUCIUS LEFFING STORY

by JOSEPH PAYNE BRENNAN

ALTHOUGH MY friend, Lucius Leffing, preferred to limit himself to those investigations which led him toward the sphere of the supernormal, of later years he frequently interested himself in mysteries of a purely mundane, albeit bizarre, character. His probing, restless mind was like a blade continually seeking a whetstone on which to sharpen itself. And the fact of the matter was, there simply were not enough cases of a supernatural nature to occupy his time.

One November afternoon when I was seated in his Victorian living room at seven Autumn Street, the doorbell rang. Leffing arose from his favorite Morris chair and entered the adjoining hall. In a few moments he returned bearing a package. It contained a piece of Victorian art glass, a ribbed Amberina bowl, which he had bought in an antique shop while out of

This story has a touch of the macabre rare in mystery fiction. But that isn't at all surprising, for the author both publishes and edits the magazine "Macabre."



town. Not wanting to carry it around, he had arranged to have it mailed.

He handed it to me; it was a beautiful piece. After inspecting it with some deliberation, I remarked on its deep red color and delicate design. Leffing did not respond. I looked up to see that his attention was completely absorbed by a newspaper in which the bowl had been packed.

After about ten minutes, during which he appeared to read the same article several times, he glanced up.

"Fascinating, Brennan!" he exclaimed. "An unsolved disappearance of forty years ago!"

"You mean to say that newspaper is forty years old?"

He shook his head. "No. This newspaper appeared quite recently. It is a copy of *The Hartland Hollow Gazette.* The author of the article is recalling a disappearance, believed to have been murder, which occurred in the Hartland area forty years ago. Judson Phelps, an itenerant peddler of household notions, was seen in Hartland late one summer afternoon and thereafter 'vanished from the face of the earth' as the article writer states. His horse and buggy vanished as well."

"There were no clues whatever, then?"

Leffing nodded. "Clues and a suspect, but never any proof. A lad reported that he had seen Phelps getting out of his buggy at the farm of one Henry Swetell, a bachelor. Swetell admitted that the peddler had stopped, but said that he was busy 'hayin' ' and told the old man to go into the farm house and refresh himself. Swetell swore that when he himself returned to the house Phelps had left."

"What would the motive have been?" I inquired. "Robbery?"

"Presumably," Leffing replied. "According to the article, Phelps was known to carry around a fair amount of cash. And Henry Swetell was heavily in debt, 'land poor' it was said."

I shrugged. "It was probably easy enough to hide a corpse on a large farm in those days."

Picking up the Amberian bowl, Leffing held it to the light. "Not so much easier than it is today. And what about the horse and buggy?"

"That does pose a bit of a problem," I admitted. "Was the farm searched?"

"The article writer says that it was 'combed for clues', without success. The farm house contained no traces of blood; and nowhere in the fields or woods was there any indication of disturbed earth."

"Let me see the article."

I read it through but learned little of further interest. A poor photograph showed the sagging remains of Swetell's house and nearby barn. After his death some

years later, the property had been taken over by the town for tax arrears. No buyers could be found and the land as well as the buildings had been neglected for decades. There was the not surprising legend that the farm house was haunted.

I handed the paper back. "I'm afraid poor Peddler Phelps will haunt that house in vain," I said. "His murderer will never be known."

Leffing stared moodily at the newspaper article. He seemed about to lay it aside when suddenly his eyes lit up and he leaped from his chair, nearly knocking the Amberina bowl onto the floor.

"By thunder, I have it!"

"You have what?"

"The solution to Phelps' disappearance!"

I frowned crossly. "Leffing, with all due respect to your abilities, this is just too melodramatic. How can you solve a forty-year-old disappearance by reading a newspaper article?"

He ignored my question, asked one of his own. "Is your old Studebaker in fair running order?"

"Fair enough."

"Tomorrow, then, if you are not too busy, we might take a run up to Hartland. What do you say?"

Of course Leffing knew perfectly well when he asked the question that I would not be able to decline. My life consisted largely of routine and I looked forward eagerly to any little excursions with my investigator friend. He had rarely disappointed me, even though I frequently started out filled with skepticism.

Accordingly, early the next morning we were on our way. The drive took about an hour. As we pushed into the hills of northern Connecticut, the scenery became more and more rewarding. Most of the leaves had fallen, but they made a colorful scarf-carpet along the edges of the woods and pastures.

I was familiar with the route to Hartland, and after a single inquiry, we located the old Swetell farm. I parked alongside the thistle-and-burdock dooryard and we got out.

The house, an old saltbox with an added ell, was quite literally falling to pieces. Not a window remained unbroken; there were gaping holes in the roof; half the clapboards had dropped off or hung loose.

"New England fallen," I quoted, rather pointlessly.

Leffing nodded. "An apt description. Come along, the barn is our point of interest."

I turned. "The barn?" But he was already pushing off toward the barnyard through shoulder-high weeds and I followed grumbling.

The barn was in far worse condition than the house. The doors

appeared to have been nailed shut long ago, but it was easy enough to step through an aperture where boards had weathered away.

Thanks to the disintegrating roof, there was sufficient light inside so that we could see well enough.

Walking cautiously, Leffing crossed the barn floor to the edge of the mow and stood staring within.

I joined him. The floor of the mow appeared to be covered to a depth of several feet with a mould-covered blackish substance which I took to be a mound of fotted hay. The whole filthy mass was strewn with broken shingles, wasps' nests, huge cobwebs, fungi, leaves and bits of sticks.

Before I could protest, Leffing slipped over the short wooden partition separating the mow from the open barn floor. Wading gingerly through the rank litter until he neared the middle of the mow, he began to poke and probe with a broken pole which he had picked up.

He bent down finally and I saw him peering intently at something which thrust up slightly from the mound.

He turned around slowly and on his face was an expression which I can only describe as beatific. In the dim light his face seemed to shine with an inward glow of its own.

"Brennan," he said softly, "I have just found the remains of a buggy!"

The rest, of course, is anti-climax. I might relate in detail how we eventually located a local constable, rounded up two farmers and returned to shovel and scrape away the black mound. And how, underneath, as Leffing predicted, we found the rotted remains of a buggy (overturned, the wheels removed and lying nearby) plus the skeletons of a man and a horse, both with bullet holes in the skull.

But there is no need of detail. That is the grisly summary of the affair. After forty years, positive proof of the skeleton's identity was not possible, but there was no doubt in anyone's mind that it belonged to Peddler Phelps and that his murderer was Henry Swetell, dead himself for almost thirty years.

SEVERAL EVENINGS later, as I sipped Leffing's choice cognac in his comfortable gas-lit living room at seven Autumn Street, I continued to marvel at my friend's ability.

"I still don't see," I said, "how you solved that forty-year-old case merely by reading a newspaper article which recalled it."

Leffing set down his brandy glass. "I put myself in old Swetell's place. Standing aside his wagon-load of hay, he watched the peddler trudge off toward the

farm house. With debts crowding him, he thought of the money to be acquired by Phelps' death. I suppose something diabolical just clicked in his brain. He suddenly had a mental picture of all that hay pitched down into the mow. If old Phelps, horse, buggy and all, disappeared, who would ever think to enter Swetell's barn and fork that fresh hay out of the mow onto the barn floor? There was only a faint chance that anyone would.

"And Swetell decided to take that chance. Once he made up his mind, the rest was relatively easy. He probably struck the peddler over the head, knocking him unconscious, perhaps as he sat at table, piled him into the buggy and then led horse and buggy onto the barn floor. The mow partition is removable. He got the horse and buggy into the mow, removed the buggy wheels, overturned the top and shot both man and horse."

Leffing paused, sipping some cognac. "After putting back the partition, he drove his team into the barn and pitched a whole load of hay down into the mow. He took some chance on being interrupted, but he lived on a pretty isolated road in those days. The risk was slight. Undoubtedly searchers entered the barn later, but it is obvious that none of them thought of removing that new hay from the mow. Perhaps, by that time, Swetell had got another load in!

"During the winter he probably sold his livestock on some pretext and simply left the hay to rot in the mow. It is unfortunate that he was never brought to justice."

"At least," I said, "you have finally established his guilt. The papers, you know, have given the case a great play! And your reputation has been enhanced!"

A crooked grin touched Lucius Leffing's angular face. "My reputation is not of much concern to me. What really matters is that, having solved a case, we have a legitimate cause for celebration. Would you care for another cognac?"

I had not solved anything, but I am not one to quibble about pronouns on such occasions. I nodded, and held out my empty glass.

In the next issue—

MURDER THE LEADER

A New ED NOON Story

by MICHAEL AVALLONE

Mrs. Stone had more sensibility
than her name implied. So killing
her husband became a necessity.

THE DEATH OF A FRAUD

by FLETCHER FLORA

IT WAS A quarter to nine precisely when the call was received at Headquarters. A woman was on the line. She had a quiet, cultivated voice, and she said her name was Mrs. Julian Stone. She said she wanted to speak with someone in Homicide, and Lieutenant Rufus Leary was put on. She repeated her name to the lieutenant and added her address. The address was apartment 612, Altoona Apartments, Highline Drive. She said she had shot and killed her husband and was waiting for someone to come see about it.

Lieutenant Leary took Sergeant Dolph Carpenter and went to see.

The Altoona was a gray stone building with a canopy. It would take, Lieutenant Leary reflected, quite a bit of money to live in it. He and the sergeant went up to the sixth floor in an elevator with an operator, and it was apparent from the operator's attitude, which seemed normal, that he was unaware that anyone had been shot and killed in the building. On the sixth floor, Leary punched a button beside a blond oak door with chrome numbers.

The door remained closed for thirty seconds and was then opened. The woman who opened it was rather tall and quite slender, wearing something dark and simple with the easy elegance that is generally typical of rather tall and slender women. Her eyes were gray, Leary thought, but they might have been blue. He identi-

fied himself and the sergeant, and she nodded without smiling or speaking.

Turning, she walked away from the door into the room, and Leary followed. He watched her go to a chair and sit down and cross her legs at the knees. He could smell cordite.

Julian Stone was sitting in a chair facing a television set. That is, Leary assumed that it was Julian Stone, and this assumption turned out to be correct. The back of the chair was toward Leary, and all he could see of Stone was one arm. The arm of the man hung over the arm of the chair, his fingers just touching the deep pile of the carpet.

Leary walked over and looked at what the arm was attached to, and what it was attached to looked perfectly relaxed. Stone's head rested against the back of the chair in a comfortable position. There was a neat black hole in the left temple. A thin trickle of blood had run out of the hole and through the short hair in front of the ear and down across the side of the face. There was a sheen of peace on the features, the serenity of death. This expression of peace and serenity was accentuated by his closed eyes. After shooting him, Mrs. Stone had lowered the lids.

"Merciful God!" Sergeant Carpenter said softly.

"Yes," Leary said.

The television was still on, but it was probably a different program from the one Stone had been watching. The one that was on now was a Western. The volume had been turned so low that you couldn't even hear the guns go off.

Leary wondered if Stone had heard the one go off that had put the neat little hole in his temple. He was pretty sure that Stone hadn't. Stepping over to the television set, he twisted a knob until it clicked, and a cowboy and a horse disappeared in an instant.

"You better get on the phone," Leary said to Carpenter.

"Right," Carpenter said.

Leary looked around until he saw a telephone and went over to it. He went in the opposite direction as far as Mrs. Stone. She was sitting sidewise to Mr. Stone, and the only way she could see him was by turning her head rather sharply to the right. She did not turn her head, however, and Leary had a notion that she had not turned it all the time she had sat there, and that she had been sitting there, except for the time it had taken to get up and open the door and return, ever since calling Headquarters.

She had now lit a cigarette and was smoking it serenely, staring with grave gray eyes—or blue?—into the drifting thin haze as if she were looking to find in the changing shapes of the smoke a portent

of what would happen to her, or an explanation of what had.

"Mrs. Stone," Leary said.

She turned her grave eyes toward the sound of his voice and stood up to face him.

"Yes," she said. "Leona Stone."

She gave her Christian name after a slight hesitation, as if it were now somehow necessary, under the circumstances, to identify herself by another means than her relationship with a man who was dead.

"There will be more men here shortly," Leary said. "The room will be crowded and noisy. Isn't there another place we can go to talk?"

"Surely. There's the den. It's a small room off this one. Down there."

She gestured with the hand that held her cigarette toward a door at the far end of the room, and he nodded his approval.

"That would be fine," he said. "Shall we go there now?"

"If you like."

She turned and preceded him down the room, and he couldn't avoid noticing the grace of her posture and motion. The truth was, he observed it deliberately and would not have avoided doing so even if he had been given a choice. He admired physical grace in a woman. In his opinion, young women nowadays moved too often in an ugly composition of jerks and angles.

The den was quite small. It contained a library table, three chairs, and a second television set that was a great deal smaller than the one in the living room. Leary was surprised that there were no books. He had not thought of it before, of course, but now that it was impressed upon his mind in a negative sort of way by the absence of what he had subconsciously expected, he was certain that books would be natural acoutrements for Leona Stone.

She sat down in a straight chair and crushed her cigarette in a tray and folded her hands in her lap. She looked at him, and he thought he saw the slightest smile in her eyes and on her lips, but it existed so briefly, if it existed at all, that he could never afterward be certain.

"My husband didn't read," she said. "I keep all my books in my own room."

Her words made him feel queer. He had wondered about the books, but he had not expressed his thoughts, and now he wondered how on earth she could have answered so directly by coincidence a question that had not been asked. Was it possible that she had been sharpened by her terrible peril to a kind of extra-sensory awareness? But it was surely ridiculous to be diverted into such a heavy speculation for so slight a reason, the coincidence of a comment that answered a thought.

Having felt queer, he now felt foolish, and he smiled.

"I see," he said.

She looked down at her folded hands and up again. "Is this necessary?" she said.

"My talking with you? I'm afraid it is."

"No. I didn't mean that," she said. She unfolded her hands and waved one of them toward the door. "I mean out there. I suppose they will take pictures, examine everything, do things like that."

"Oh. Yes. I'm afraid that's necessary, too."

"Why? I shot him and killed him. I told you I did."

"I'm sorry. It's a routine we have to go through."

"Very well." She folded her hands again and stared at them. "What do you want me to tell you?"

"Why you killed your husband."

"I killed him because he deceived and humiliated me."

Leary didn't speak again for a few moments. He fumbled in his pocket for a cigarette and lit it with a paper match, feeling suddenly tired and a little resentful. It was after all, he reflected, only the dull repetition of a sordid story. He had hoped for something better. Under the influence of her slender and serene elegance, he had dared to hope for something that might stir his compassion or even elicit his partisanship.

The truth was, he didn't have a proper disposition at all for a policeman. He was far too susceptible to extenuations, the palliatives of circumstance, and too frequently troubled by the immorality of his commitment to a pre-established position on the basis of a general attitude fixed by law. Now he wished that he could turn his back on the present case and forget it as quickly as possible.

He had no stomach for this woman who looked so exceptional in her serenity, but who was, nevertheless, stupid and vulgar enough to destroy herself over the infidelities of a two-timing mate. He felt that she was herself guilty of a deception more gross than her husband's.

"Oh," he said. "I see."

She looked at him swiftly from the corners of her eyes, and he would have sworn that she was amused.

"Do you, Lieutenant?" she asked.

"I think so."

"I don't believe you do. If you're thinking that my husband was involved with another woman, you're mistaken."

"Am I?" He began to hope again. "Isn't that what you said?"

"Not at all. I said that he deceived me."

"If I've made a false assumption, I'm sorry. I confess that I'm confused. Perhaps you would clarify your meaning."

"I don't know if I can. It's rather

difficult. I think, however, that I'd like to try. Have you ever adored anyone, Lieutenant?"

Leary shook his head. "Adoration implies a total acceptance that I'm not capable of. A kind of blindness."

"Yes. That's true. Adoration is a form of blindness. Nevertheless, I adored Julian Stone. I first saw him when I was only fifteen years of age, he only seventeen. I was just beginning my sophomore year in high school. He was a senior. You can't imagine the effect he had on me at first sight. I—well, I adored him. I was consumed by the most exquisite agony. I spent my days in the most pleasurable pain.

"Even now, after all these years, I can still recapture it at moments as it was then. Exactly as it was. I used to stand alone in certain places after school just to see him pass by. Often I stood and waited patiently in rain or snow for the pleasure and pain of seeing him. I cherished the suffering he caused me."

She seemed to hesitate a moment. "I was almost masochistic in my suffering. But he was not aware of any of this, of course. There is so vast a gulf between a high school sophomore and a high school senior. He never spoke to me or noticed me, and the next year he was gone."

In the interval of silence that followed, Leary was convinced that she was experiencing now, in this room, the exact and terrible loneliness that she had experienced then. There was a kind of stillness in her face, a smooth and brittle expression of emptiness. Feeling in himself a little of the loneliness, he was oddly irritated.

Would he be vulnerable always, he wondered, to the pretenses of tragedy that were no less pretenses because the tragedy was real? He reminded himself that the adolescent passion of a fifteen-year-old girl was of no great consequence in the long run, and that the girl was, besides, the memory of a murderess and no more.

"Gone?" Leary said.

"Yes. Away to college, I mean. During the next two years my feeling for him did not change. If someone mentioned his name in my presence, I was breathless. When I saw him occasionally, holidays and summers, I was sick with the delicious pain that was more wonderful than happiness. That was in fact, I think, a *kind* of happiness. Always I had the loneliness that was in itself a fulfillment.

"Oh, I know what you're thinking. You're thinking that the love a child has is not so durable. I can only say that mine was. I adored Julian Stone. I imagined myself in every conceivable relationship with him, and there was none, none at all, that was not justified by my passion.

"Does that shock you? Well, never mind. I'm not interested in justifying my feeling for him, or the possible perversions of adoration. I'm only interested in explaining why I eventually had to kill him. In due time, I went to college myself. The same one, by design, that he went to. He was a junior when I arrived as a freshman, and we were together there for two years. Our relationship remained the same. I adored him silently, from a distance, and he was completely unaware of me. Until the end of his last year, that is. Then something happened. Would you like to know what it was?"

"If you'd like to tell me," Leary said.

"I think I would. I find that my confession is doing me good. The recapitulation of my relationship with Julian only makes me more assured that I have done the only acceptable thing in ending it the way I have. Besides, you are required, as a policeman, to listen. It's one of the things you're paid for. Isn't that true?"

"I suppose it is," he conceded.

"Of course it is. It must be rather unpleasant for you sometimes."

"Sometimes."

"Well, to put it simply, I seduced him. He thought, naturally, that it was the other way around, but it wasn't. I wonder why it is that men must always consider themselves the aggressors in such matters. Anyhow, I like to think that I was quite subtle about it, and it's certain that he didn't understand clearly how the seduction began and developed. It was the night of a college dance. I had gone with another man, and that night, for the first time, Julian became aware of me. I don't know why. I can't explain it.

"It's true, I believe, that there's an exact time for everything to happen. Everything happens at a certain time in a certain place, and neither before nor after nor anywhere else. He had been drinking too much, was rather drunk, and we danced several times together. Later, quite late, we went outside and walked down through a grove of trees to a small lake. It was there, on the grass beside the lake in the shadow of the trees, that it happened.

"I can see that you're embarrassed, that you're thinking it was no more than a cheap and vulgar little experience. But it wasn't. Not to me. I was innocent. I had never been intimate with a man before, and the truth is, the physical part was rather unpleasant. At least it was a disappointment.

"But the total intimacy, the experience of submission and dominance together, was tremendously satisfying and exciting. It was the climax of everything that had gone before, all that I had felt for him. I really had no expectation that anything like it would ever happen to me again. He took his degree

shortly afterward, and in the summer following he was married.

"Please don't think that I wasted away as a result. It was nothing I hadn't anticipated, and I was reasonably mature. I had learned long ago to live with my emotions, and I had several genuine interests to make life tolerable. I had studied music and loved to play it and listen to it. I had developed a deep interest in history and literature. Books and music gave life a purpose. I took my own degree and managed to survive and even to enjoy myself.

"But all the time, through the several years that passed after college, my adoration of Julian Stone continued. It was quite impossible to become interested in another man. Incredible? I see that you think it is. Nevertheless, it's true. I accepted a condition that I couldn't help, and I was resigned to living and dying alone.

"Then we met again. Julian and I. I won't impose the details upon you, for they're unimportant. We met, and he remembered me, and after a while we even recalled and discussed our experience beside the lake. He said that he had always remembered it with pleasure, and I said that I had, too. This simple candor got us off to a good start, and I could tell in subsequent meetings that he was at last seriously interested in me. It's rather odd, isn't it, that it should finally come to that after all the years? His wife, it turned out, was very ill. She was dying of cancer, but she was most terribly slow about it. I became Julian's mistress and waited for his wife to die."

So they had come again to the moment of denouement. So they had come through a recounting of fantastic and enduring adoration to a sordid end. Worse, if possible, than the one he had feared in the

beginning. The sick wife who lingered and would not die. The impatient lovers. Murder by one or the other or both. Thereafter, the sour suspicion and estrangement of two guilty people, ending finally in another death. Suicide or murder. This time, unfortunately for Lieutenant Rufus Leary, murder. Hope, which had revived, expired. He sighed wearily and became aware that she was again looking at him with an amused expression from the corners of her eyes.

"No, no," she said. "You're entirely wrong."

"What?"

"Neither of us killed her. She died naturally of her cancer."

"Sorry." Leary had that odd impression of extra-sensory perception on her part. "Never jump to conclusions," he said. "I should have learned that by now."

"It was a logical conclusion. Except, of course, that it was wrong. But I'm almost finished. Listen for a little longer, and I'll be through. Julian and I met in odd places. In small bars and in private rooms of obscure restaurants. Now and then we stayed together in an out-of-the-way hotel. I had gained some experience, and our physical relationship gave me pleasure that made the joy of our spiritual union all the more intense.

"We were absorbed in each other. When we were together, which was necessarily infrequently, we had no time to think or talk about anything but our love or anyone but ourselves. To you it may sound like a tawdry, backstreet affair. To me it was the consummation of my long adoration. Or almost the consummation. I waited and waited for his wife to die, and after a while she did. Naturally. Of her cancer."

She paused, staring at her folded hands, and he saw that the fingers were twisted, whitened at the knuckles. Beneath her surface serenity she was, he thought, approaching in her mind a revelation and a crisis.

"At last," she said, "Julian Stone was mine. He was committed to me, and he was eager to keep his commitment. After a decent interval, we were married, and we took this apartment. I was, for a while, so overwhelmed by the incredible miracle of my position that I lived in a kind of delirium. I could hardly believe what had happened. In the morning I would waken and watch him quietly as he slept by my side.

"Often, in the middle of the night, I would waken and turn on the light so I could see him, and afterward, in the dark, I would lie and listen to his breathing. He was beautiful when he slept. There was a kind of shining innocence about him, like a child's. And then, all at once, I wakened one morning and looked at him and knew that something was wrong. Something had, in fact, been wrong all

along, but I was only aware of it for the first time in that instant.

"Once I was aware of that basic truth, the wrongness, I was aware, too, of what the wrongness was precisely. Julian Stone was a bore, and I was becoming bored. He had no opinions on anything of value. He had not tastes of the least distinction. He didn't even have any interesting prejudices. We had, the two of us, a kind of animal contact. Nothing more."

She had spoken faster and faster toward the end, as if she were in a terrible rush to get through the degrading confession, and she stopped all at once with a little gasp. Leary could hear, for the first time now, the sound of her breathing.

"Can you imagine my horror?" she said after a few moments. "Can you feel the least part of my shame and degradation? If he had proved a sadist or a pervert or a philanderer, it would have been tolerable and something I could have accepted without personal shame. Do you understand? *For seventeen years, since I was a child, I had adored a dullard and a bore!* A woman in love with a monster may have a kind of monstrous dignity. A woman in love with a fool is an even greater fool. Surely there could have been no deception more shameful. Every time I looked at him, I could hear the derisive laughter of God.

"I thought at first that I would simply leave him, but then I realized that this would expunge no part of my shame. Nor would it punish him as he deserved. I knew what I had to do, and tonight I did it. He was sitting and watching a foolish television program, and I was sitting and watching him in my shame, and suddenly I went out of the room and got the gun and came back and shot him. You are a perceptive man, Lieutenant. I saw that immediately. Surely you understand that what I did was necessary."

Leary stood up with a sense of unreality. He seemed to be floating out of material contact.

"Sure," he said. "Oh, sure."

He didn't know if he wanted to curse or cry or laugh. The only thing he knew certainly was that he had to get away from her at once.

"You'll be taken downtown soon," he said. "Please wait here."

"Yes," she said. "Of course."

Her serenity had returned. She sat in it with folded hands, and he went out into the next room and spoke to Sergeant Carpenter.

"Mrs. Stone is waiting in the den," he said. "She's made a full confession. When you're finished here, take her to Headquarters and get it on paper."

"Right," Carpenter said. "Are you leaving?"

"Yes. I feel rather odd. I think I'll go home."

"Sick?"

"No. Just odd. Tired, I guess. I'll see you tomorrow."

"Sure."

Leary went out. He returned to Headquarters for a quarter of an hour, and then went home. His wife was asleep in her twin bed when he got there. He went into the bedroom and turned on a bedside lamp and sat on the edge of the bed and stared at her face until she wakened. He had learned long ago that she would always waken if he sat and stared at her long enough.

"What's the matter?" she said.

"Nothing's the matter. I was just wondering about something."

"About what?"

"Tell me. Have you ever been bored with me since our marriage?"

"Frequently."

"I thought so. Does it ever make you feel ashamed or cheated?"

"Ashamed? Cheated? Don't be absurd. After all, I knew what to expect. You bored me frequently *before* we were married."

"Oh. I guess that makes the difference."

"What difference? What on earth are you talking about?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all. May I share your bed tonight?"

She smiled and moved over, making room.

"Please do," she said. "There are also times, you know, when you *don't* bore me."

Some of Next Month's Exciting Stories

STONE COLD IN THE MARKET PLACE by CLAYTON MATTHEWS

MURDER THE LEADER by MICHAEL AVALLONE

THE HARTFORD STORY by HARRY D. ESHLEMAN

A MATTER OF INTEGRITY by PAUL W. FAIRMAN

FLOWERS FOR A CORPSE by PETER OPPENHEIM

THE TERRIBLE FOOTSTEPS by T. C. McCLARY

(Continued from page 64)

The car could also have been a killer who walked through the grass to approach the Morgan beach house from the beach side. It was now almost certain that Roxie Van Allen had been killed here. That made prime suspects of all members of the Morgan household—and Paul Hening. With Rourke checking on Hening and Anne, it left Alida, Donald and Angus Morgan himself for Shayne to check.

Alida would be first. He was not far from the roadhouse she was supposed to have been at that night—Dino's.

XV

DINO'S ROADHOUSE was a low, white building surrounded by a large parking lot. There were few cars in the lot at this early evening hour.

Inside, the place was dim and barn-like. Four or five groups of teenagers sat at the plain wooden tables that surrounded a large dance floor. The bar was long and set against the left wall. As Shayne came in an enormous juke box, which stood like an idol at the narrow end of the dance floor, started to play.

"Yeh," a voice said.

Shayne saw the woman sitting at a rear table. He thought it was a woman. She was sitting down and had a bottle of whisky and one glass in front of her. Shayne walked toward her.

The woman was thick and square. Her face was like a lumpy rectangle. Her black hair was short, and she wore a man's shirt, a man's Wellington boots, and outsize blue jeans. Her voice was deep and rough. All this was in grotesque contrast to her bright red lipstick and long, dangling earrings loaded with rhinestones.

"What you want?" the woman said as Shayne walked to her.

"Some friendly talk," Shayne said and sat down at her table.

"Get lost," the woman said.

"Be nice," Shayne said, "police."

"Show me?"

Shayne produced his credentials. The woman sneered.

"Private cop," the woman said. "Get real lost."

She had all the charm and grace of a lady wrestler. Shayne smiled at her. "This is murder, sweetheart," he said. "I could leave it to the cops."

"Leave it," the woman said. She cocked an eye at Shayne. "Maybe not. What's your name, handsome?"

Shayne raised a ragged red eyebrow. The lady wrestler was watching him. The prospect made him shudder inside.

"Shayne," he said.

"Mike Shayne? Why don't you say so first. I read about you." And the female heavyweight eyed

him up and down. "You're big, like they said. How about trying two falls out of three?"

"I'd lose," Shayne said.

"Maybe not," the lady said. "What do you want from me. I'm Dino."

"A kid named Alida Morgan," Shayne said. "She comes here a lot."

"She sure does. A good spender."

"Was she here a week ago Monday night?"

"She sure was," Dino said.

"You're that sure?" Shayne said.

"It's my business. The Morgan kid got the long green, she spends. She buys for whole tables of the nuts," the woman said, and added, "You call me Dino, honey."

"Short for what?" Shayne said.

"Short for Isabelle, and if you tell I mangle you," Dino said.

"Alida Morgan buys for a whole table of friends?" Shayne said, getting back to the point.

"Not regular. She's a table hopper, a butterfly. She pops for any table takes her eye. She throws it all around. The money and her private treasures, if you get what I mean."

"But she's here a lot, and you know her on sight?"

"Man, that white Jag lives in my lot. I just wish she wouldn't tickle that rotten guitar. She plays lousy."

"Isn't she old for your place?"

Dino scratched at her solid chin. Shayne found himself idly wondering if she shaved or not. Dino was musing.

"It's funny, Shayne. They grow up fast. Fifteen years old and they know the whole score these days. Only they stay the same age a hell of a long time. Take this Morgan kid. She comes in here first when she was sixteen and looked twenty and acted thirty. Now she's twenty-three or so, looks twenty, and acts sixteen. You figure it."

"She has a lot of friends?"

"A lot. I mean, she's the princess, you know? The big deal. She buys and they kiss her. She got 'em all hanging on like stray dogs and she likes it. The queen. Once Danny told her to let him play his own guitar and she busted it over him."

"Danny? A boy-friend?" Shayne asked.

Dino nodded. "One of 'em. She's a butterfly there, too. Not real bad like some, maybe two or three boys at once. Danny was one."

"And the others?"

"A writer type named Don Maddern. Funny, though, he give her the shoulder a lot, real cool."

Shayne could understand why Donald Maddern would cold shoulder Alida. He did not think that Angus Morgan would want his daughter with Maddern right now. Donald would risk a very good and easy job.

"Was Maddern here with her Monday week?"

She shook her head. "Didn't see him that night. She was busy with Danny and Marco."

"Marco is another boy friend?"

"Yeh, Marco Venuta. Leather-jacket type. He's older, maybe her own age or more. You know the type, a big man in a kid's world so he stays a kid. I figure he ain't no better than he got to be, only I got nothing on him. He really hung onto the Morgan kid. Maybe it was love."

"Was?"

"Marco ain't been around for a while. It looks like Danny won out for a while anyway. She been in here a lot with Danny the last week."

"But she was with both of them a week ago Monday night?"

"With? Who knows? I mean, she was here and they was here, that's the way it is with these kids. Danny plays guitar and Marco holds her hand. Marco goes for beer and Danny sits head to head with her. How you gonna figure who's with who?"

"Did she stay long that night?"

"All night, Shayne. That's why I remember that night so good. Most nights she's in and out, buzzing around in that white Jag, coming back for the boys. Only that night she stayed all the way past closing at two A.M."

"Who did she stay with, go home with?"

Dino shook her leonine head. "That much I don't remember. They was all here though, except maybe Maddern. In and out, buzzin' around in those hot rods—all except her."

Shayne nodded. "One more thing, do you know a woman named Roxie Van Allen? A blonde—" Shayne described the dead woman.

Dino laughed. "In here? We don't get women like that. It'd scare all the punk kids into trying to make her."

Shayne stood up. "Thanks, Dino. I'll mention you to the cops."

"Don't do me no favors," Dino said.

Shayne left the lady King Kong moodily drinking her whisky and looking at the clock as if to prepare for the influx of her noisy clientele. He returned to his car, and drove back toward Miami. The next call had to be on a Mr. Alistair Goode who had supposedly called Angus Morgan from his house the night of the murder.

But as he drove north in the early evening sun, Shayne thought about Donald Maddern. The youthful butler had more than a paid interest in Alida Morgan. Shayne remembered the vague, misty memory he had had when he had been knocked out in the San Marcos Motel. He vaguely remembered sandals and some kind of peculiar grey-black trousers or slacks. Donald wore black and grey striped trousers in his job as a butler! And Donald was the

young, beach-boy, sandal type who went to *Dino's* place at times.

XVI

MIKE SHAYNE found Mr. Alistair Goode at his Club in downtown Miami. It took time, and it was dark by the time he drove up to the Club.

Mr. Alistair Goode turned out to be a very old, very rich, and very irritable man. The financier was annoyed at Shayne questioning him, annoyed at Shayne being in the Club, and anxious to finish his brandy alone. Goode fidgeted testily and glared at Shayne.

"Angus Morgan here? Of course he was here, young man! He said he was here, didn't he?"

"That's not exactly the same thing," Shayne said.

"Don't be impertinent! Damn it, sir, with Angus Morgan of course it's the same thing, you hear? Angus said he was here, I say he was here, so, damn it, he was here!"

Goode had raised his voice and other members of the silent and sepulchral Club darted black looks from behind their newspapers. At the desk a uniformed attendent looked very uneasy and upset. Shayne guessed that noise was a mortal sin here, but that Mr. Alistair Goode was all but above reproach. It posed quite a touchy dilemma for the Club employees.

"Just exactly what time was he here then?" Shayne said. "Can you tell me the precise times?"

"I can," Goode snapped, "but I'm damned if I will! Gall, pure gall!"

"Mr. Goode," Shayne said harshly, "two people have been murdered. The police can ask you questions if you'd like that better!"

"I think, young man, you had better leave before I have you ejected bodily!"

Shayne stood up. "Suit yourself. Maybe Chief Gentry can get more cooperation."

The old man closed one eye and looked up at Shayne. "Touchy, eh? Why didn't you say Will Gentry was involved. Good man, Gentry. Foul cigars, but a good man. Very well, young man, now just what is your problem?"

Shayne sat again. "The times, Mr. Goode. Arrival and departure, exactly if you can remember," he said.

"Of course I can remember. Mind like a time clock," Goode snapped. "Yes, he arrived about half past ten, left exactly at half past eleven. Asked me to join him for a nightcap. I declined. Too old for a nightcap so early, eh? Had a backgammon game to play here."

"Eleven-thirty? You're sure?" Shayne mused on the hour. That might have given Morgan barely enough time to have killed Roxie. It had taken him slightly more than twenty-five minutes to drive in from the approximate location

of the beach house to near Goode's Club.

"I said eleven-thirty," Goode snapped. "You're not deaf, eh?"

Shayne ignored that. "You called Morgan to come here?"

"I did. Matter of a debenture issue. Had an idea for a financial killing. Like to move fast in those things, eh?"

"I can imagine," Shayne said. He had a lot of sympathy for those who engaged in business with Alistair Goode.

Shayne thanked the testy old man and left the Club. There was a look of relief on the faces of the Club employees as he walked out to his car. Morgan could have had time, but what was the real motive? To free his daughter? Possibly, but why kill Roxie? The same went for Alida Morgan and Paul Hening. Both of them might have hated Tozere. Donald, too. The young butler could have had a crush on Anne Tozere, and wanted Tozere dead. But why should he have wanted Roxie dead?

The only one who had an obvious motive for killing Roxie was Anne Tozere herself. And he was sure that Tozere had been killed only because Roxie had been slain first. He started his car and headed toward the offices of the *Miami Daily News*. Maybe Rourke would have discovered something about Anne Tozere. A woman scorned, cheated on, could easily turn to murder.

As he drove he turned to consideration of the third woman. The unknown woman who had gone to the San Marcos Motel to meet Tozere, and who had left something there important enough to risk returning for. Not returning at once, but only some two weeks later after the two murders. After Shayne had learned about the San Marcos Motel. Sally-Ann Bowles? Maybe. But, then, the woman at the San Marcos could have no connection to the murders at all.

He called up to Rourke when he arrived at the *Daily News* Building. The reporter told him to wait in *Mancuso's Tavern* across the street. Shayne did not have to wait long. He was still on his first sidecar when the elongated reporter appeared and sat down in the booth with him.

"What did you get?" Shayne said.

"Hening went to New York that night," Rourke reported. "No doubt about it. He picked up his reservations at eight-fifteen PM, and he was seen on the jet. Nonstop to New York. I had New York check. He stayed at The Americana and checked out about eleven A.M. Tuesday morning. He's clear."

"And Anne Tozere?" Shayne asked.

Rourke frowned. "That's another story. I called her friends in Palm Beach, and they confirmed that

she was there. But I don't believe them. There was a lot of wariness. I got the man first, and when I made a casual check he kind of stuttered and called his wife to the phone. She was more positive. But when I mentioned that Tozere was murdered she seemed damned uneasy.

"She didn't exactly hedge, but she really wanted to know who I was and all that. She sounded shrewd enough to know that lying to me isn't a crime, but I got the idea that she'd spill her guts to the cops. I don't think Anne was there at all. But I do have an idea."

Shayne rubbed his chin. He trusted Rourke, the lean reporter had a nose for liars. If Rourke was sure that Anne Tozere had not been in Palm Beach, she probably had not been.

"Go ahead, Tim, what idea?" Shayne said.

"I think she and Hening were together in New York."

Shayne tugged on his ear and drank his sidecar. He waved to the waiter for a second sidecar and a rye and water for Rourke.

"Why?" Shayne said at last.

"No concrete proof," Rourke said slowly, "but my man in New York says that after twenty-five bucks changed hands the clerk at the Americana said he had seen Hening greet a blonde woman in the lobby. On top of that, Hening had a visitor that night who gave his name, Jon Kee, and that checks out as a lawyer friend of Hening's. Maybe she took a quick trip to check on legal ways of taking care of Tozere. You said they had been having trouble."

Shayne slowly drank his second sidecar. The waiter had left. Anne Tozere had more or less said that her trip had been sudden. After a weekend at the beach house with Tozere, she could well have been in the mood to talk to a lawyer. But why New York, and why hide it? Paul Hening? Maybe it had been more than a business trip. On the other hand, if Anne had not been in Palm Beach—and that would come out sooner or later now that it was murder—she still had the only real motive for killing Roxie—jealousy.

"An old lady next door to the Morgan beach house says that Anne and Tozere were there Monday night," Shayne said slowly. "If she was, then maybe she talked Tozere into leaving and got Roxie there to kill her. She might not have known Roxie could not swim."

Shayne told Rourke what he had found at the Morgan beach house, including the green garter and the missing pale blue bathing suit.

"What color suit did Roxie have on?" Shayne asked.

Rourke took out his notebook. "Pale blue, size ten."

"It fits all right," the redhead said.

"But Mike," Rourke said, "we know that Roxie and Tozere were together that night. The manager at the Heverly Arms saw them go out. The way you have it Tozere would have had to leave Roxie and meet Anne in about an hour or so. I suppose she could have come back unexpectedly, but it seems thin."

Shayne nodded. "I think Mrs. Warren saw Tozere go into the beach house with Roxie. It's three hundred yards. There's a light over the door, but it's a long way. No, the old lady saw Tozere bring Roxie to the beach house. He knew Anne was away—"

Shayne stopped. The detective sat there with his sidecar suspended half way to his mouth. He closed his eyes. He was seeing the rocks near the beach house, the green garter, the faint path and the traces of a parked car beside the road, the pale blue bathing suit that was not there, and Emil Tozere leaving the house in a hurry that night. He saw Roxie Van Allen alone in the Morgan beach house at midnight.

"Damn it, that's it," Shayne said very low, very quietly now. "Tim, read me what you have on what Tozere was wearing when we found the body."

Rourke opened his notebook again. "Grey silk suit, grey and white striped tie, white shirt with monogram, grey suede shoes, no hat, white carnation in lapel, wedding ring, wrist watch, and diamond stick pin." The reporter looked up. "What is it, Mike? What do you have?"

"I think the answer, Tim. It fits everything," Shayne said grimly. "The way Roxie died. The torn-out earring. The reason for the third-rate frame-up. Come on."

"Where to?"

"The Morgan mansion, Tim. But first I've got to make a call to one damned stubborn police chief."

Shayne strode to the telephone booth in the rear of the tavern. When he finally got through to Gentry, the Chief was not optimistic.

"Corbett could have killed her and still had his meet. Those boys say that what they told you is all a lie."

"You can check the robbery," Shayne said.

"We did, and it checks one hundred percent. Witnesses saw Mangin and O'Banion, but there just aren't any witnesses to the time of the meet with Corbett," Gentry pointed out.

"Then I guess I have to hand you a killer," Shayne said. "I want two things. Send your boys out to the San Marcos Motel and dust a cabin for fingerprints. The fat proprietor will show you the right cabin when you show him Tozere's picture. Dust it like a blanket. I want every print you can find. The place isn't high class. There'll

probably be prints from Noah himself."

"And two?" Gentry said from the other end of the line.

"Come out to the Morgan house and bring Sally-Ann Bowles."

Gentry exploded. "Mike, so help me I'll—"

"Just show up if you want a killer," Shayne said and hung up.

He stepped out of the booth and motioned for Rourke. The two men hurried out to Shayne's car. As the drove, Shayne talked.

"I need your help, Tim. No matter what I say, back me up. All I've really got is this wild hunch, and I need an air-tight case. Remember, don't be surprised at anything I say."

Rourke nodded. The car drove on as fast as Shayne could drive in the dark of the warm night.

XVII

A HALF AN HOUR later Mike Shayne and Tim Rourke stood in the large living room of the Morgan mansion. Anne Tozere sat quietly in an enormous throne-like chair. A nervous and irritable Paul Hening stood beside her. Alida Morgan perched on the edge of another large chair, her slim legs swinging in a pair of tight blue jeans. Angus Morgan stood near the enormous fireplace, smoking a cigar. Donald Maddern was trying to be unobtrusive near the door.

"I told you we wanted to help, Shayne," Morgan said, "but does Mr. Rourke have to be here? I would rather keep the family out of the newspapers."

"Tim is here off the record, Mr. Morgan. He has some special information I need," Shayne said.

"Why the devil are we here, Shayne?" Paul Hening said. "Isn't this whole mess sordid enough? Chief Gentry told us all about it, and I'm damned if I see how we fit in? Tozere was having an affair with that woman, and Corbett killed them!"

Will Gentry strode into the room followed by two of his men and Sally-Ann Bowles. The gruff Chief of Police scowled at Shayne.

"That's the way we see it, Hening," Gentry said. "But you folks hired Shayne, we better hear him out."

Gentry waited until Sally-Ann was seated before he turned back to Shayne. "Go ahead, Mike," he said.

Shayne nodded. "Thanks, Will. Now, the way I see it Roxie's death really was intended to look like an accident all along. The killer just didn't know Roxie was afraid of the water. It was no spur-of-the-moment killing. It had been planned, I don't know for how long.

"The killer followed Tozere and Roxie to the beach house that night. An accomplice telephoned Tozere with some message strong enough to get him away. Then the

killer slugged Roxie, dressed her in a bathing suit, dumped her into the bay and held her under. He then left her clothes on the rocks for the police to find and assume it was an accident. He—"

"But, Mike—" Rourke began, and stopped. He saw Shayne's grey eyes on him and realized that this was what Shayne had meant. He wanted someone to believe the clothes had been on the rocks.

"He used one of your suits, Mrs. Tozere," Shayne went on.

"My suit?" Anne Tozere said. "I haven't been to the beach house since Emil vanished. I would have missed it."

"Yes, you would have," Shayne said. He paused to light a cigarette. His grey eyes were like steel points as he blew the smoke. "Tozere came back and found Roxie gone. He probably looked for her, but he would have had no reason to think she had done anything but walk out. He might even have thought that Corbett had come for her. She could have called someone, angry at being left alone. Tozere did know Corbett was around, didn't he, Sally-Ann?"

Startled, the dark-haired girl nodded. "Yes, Roxie told him. He asked if Roxie was at Corbett's apartment the morning he called me."

"Right," Shayne said. "Anyway, he obviously decided to go on home. Perhaps he thought Anne had come back from Palm Beach. So he went home as if nothing had happened. He didn't know it had, not then."

Will Gentry looked at his cigar. "That telephone call you say lured him away. Wouldn't that have made him suspicious? I mean, a phony call and all?"

"No, Will, I figure the call was legitimate. I mean, as far as Tozere knew. It was a real call, from a real person, with a real reason to want to see him."

Gentry nodded. "Go on, Mike," he said.

"The next day Tozere left the house early and went out looking for Roxie. He went back to the beach house; he had sand in his pants cuff. He went to his love-nest in the Heverly Arms. When Roxie wasn't there he called *Dave & Joe's Cellar*. She wasn't at the bar, so he called her apartment and talked to Sally-Ann. I don't know if he went to Corbett's place or not, but at some point that morning he read the paper and found out what had happened to Roxie.

"He knew her fear of water, he knew she didn't have a bathing suit with her that night, and he then wondered about that telephone call. He was sure it was murder, and he guessed who. But he was no civic-minded citizen, our Tozere. He smelled money. He called the killer and demanded twenty-five thousand as a starter. All he got was dead. The killer

went to the Heverly Arms and killed him.

"Then the killer went to Corbett's room and planted the earring and stole the money clip, returned to the Heverly Arms to plant the money clip, wiped the place clean, and then went back to the beach house. At the beach house the killer took away Roxie's clothes because the accident would no longer hold. He figured all bases were covered and just waited for Corbett to be arrested."

Shayne stopped and there was a long silence in the room. Rourke was puzzled by all that Shayne had left out. Will Gentry chewed his cigar, clearly unconvinced.

"One thing, Mike," Gentry said. "If this mythical killer did not know Roxie, how did he know who Corbett was or where he lived?"

Shayne shrugged. "Simple, Will. Tozere told the killer! You see, the killer had to be someone Tozere knew well, and all Tozere wanted was money. He would have wanted the killer safe. He knew Corbett was a crook. He undoubtedly suggested that even if Corbett had an alibi the police might not believe it with Corbett's record."

"Tozere just stood there talking and helping his killer?" Gentry said.

"Why not, Will? The killer had brought the twenty-five thousand. They knew each other very well. Tozere would want the killer safe to keep on paying. The killer wanted to lull Tozere until the killer could attack."

"Tozere knew this killer had killed the night before and still felt safe?" Gentry said. "He must have been pretty stupid."

"Maybe he had a reason," Shayne said, and the redhead turned to look at Anne Tozere. "You said your trip to Plam Beach was spur-of-the-moment. You had planned to spend more time at the beach house with your husband, but you had a fight Sunday and left for Palm Beach Monday evening. You had been at the beach house all weekend up until then?"

"Yes, Mr. Shayne," Anne Tozere said.

"No one knew of your sudden trip? No one can prove you even went to Palm Beach? No one here knew you went?" Mike Shayne asked.

"Only Emil himself, Mr. Shayne," the beautiful blonde said.

Paul Hening, beside Anne, started to say something and stopped. Angus Morgan stepped away from the fireplace, his thin cigar poised in mid-air like a dagger. Alida Morgan and Sally-Ann Bowles were looking at the tall, blonde widow.

"See here, Shayne, if you're implying that my daughter—" Angus Morgan began.

Shayne stopped the man with a sharp wave of his hand. His voice

was harsh and quick as he hammered home his points.

"Tozere was playing serious house with Roxie. Roxie had told Sally-Ann that she really hoped it would work out all the way with Tozere. When Anne found out about it she became desperate. It was too much. She did not want to lose her husband. All that malarkey about not liking divorce is just a cover up for her need to hold Tozere no matter how rotten he was.

"Up until Roxie! Roxie was the last straw. Now Tozere might leave her! So she faked the Palm Beach trip, lured Tozere from the beach house, and killed Roxie. Tozere would have come running after a call by her. She did not know Roxie well enough to know about the phobia. She was surprised to find Roxie at the beach house without a bathing suit, but her own suits fitted Roxie so she used one. The Palm beach lie was good enough because there was supposed to be no murder, just an accident.

"The Palm Beach yarn was really only to lull Tozere into meeting Roxie. The killing was to be an accident. But Tozere knew about the phobia, and the next day—"

Anne Tozere spoke softly. "I was in Palm Beach, Mr. Shayne. You know I was. You had Mr. Rourke check on me."

Shayne looked at the beautiful blonde. "And your friends reported immediately, eh? I imagine they are worried. No, Anne, you weren't in Palm Beach. Do you really want the Waltaires to lie for you now that it's murder? This isn't just an escapade any more, Anne. It isn't just your reputation."

Paul Hening stepped toward Mike Shayne. His voice was strained, taut, as it broke the heavy silence of the room. "She said she was in Palm Beach, Shayne!"

There was menace in the voice of Hening. At that moment the man would have been capable of almost any defense of Anne Tozere. The beautiful blonde seemed sad as she looked at Hening. Then her fine eyes looked calmly at Shayne.

"Never mind, Paul. Mr. Shayne knows the truth, I think. Yes, Mr. Shayne, I was not in Palm Beach. I was in New York with Paul. I suppose I'm a bit of a coward as well as a fool. I just did not want people to know we were together in New York. Vanity.

"I loved Paul before Emil, and I think I love Paul again now. When Emil ruined our weekend this time, I suppose I broke. I wanted to think. I wanted someone to really love me. Paul persuaded me to go to New York with him. He convinced me that I should see his lawyer friend Mr. Kee to discuss a possible separation or even a threat of divorce. If

nothing else it was to scare Emil. I agreed that a New York lawyer would be best. Emil had ways of finding things out here in Miami."

She looked at Hening and then at Shayne again. "That was what I told myself—that the trip was to think and to perhaps find a way to threaten Emil. But that isn't true. I really wanted to go with Paul, didn't I? I really wanted to be with him, to be loved by him. I made such an issue out of keeping Emil that I never knew my own feelings."

Alida Morgan suddenly laughed. "My sainted sister has feet of clay after all! Or is it feet I mean? Too bad you didn't know all this before."

"Can you prove you were there?" Shayne said.

"Of course we can," Paul Hening said. "Kee knows. Her hotel clerk can identify her. The stewardess on our flight will remember us."

"That should do it then," Shayne said. "Since you weren't here the next day you couldn't have taken the telephone call. I wonder who did. Maddern! Who took the call from Tozere that day!"

The youthful butler turned pale. Until now Donald Maddern had been leaning against the door trying not to be seen. Now he looked frightened as Shayne turned to him. All the eyes in the room were on him.

"A call? I—I—don't remember a particular call from Mr. Tozere. No one mentioned it. I mean, I—"

"Think, Donald!" Shayne snapped. "That call was what sent the killer to murder Tozere! Did you take it, Donald!?"

"I—no! No. I didn't—"

It was Angus Morgan who spoke. "I took the call, Shayne! I killed Tozere and that woman!"

Angus Morgan's face had gone dead white. The silver-haired man was leaning forward in a chair now, his face suddenly hard.

XVIII

THEY ALL STARED at Angus Morgan. Rourke seemed puzzled, and Anne Tozere horrified. Will Gentry scowled as he motioned to his men to watch Morgan closely.

"I met the woman at that party I told you about," Morgan said quickly, almost eagerly. "I killed them both. They deserved to die!"

"You did it all alone," Shayne asked softly.

"Yes. You know I had time. Alistair Goode told me you were checking. I called Tozere from that Club. Naturally he would come to me if I asked. He liked my money. I drove to the beach house and killed her. The rest is just as you said. Tozere blackmailed me and I killed him."

Shayne tugged on his ear as if puzzled. "Let's go over it, step by step. You made the call and then

drove to the beach house. You could have made it, barely. But how did you know Tozere and Roxie were at the beach house? Anne and Tozere were supposed to be there?"

"A friend saw them and called me!"

"Why didn't Tozere wonder about your call later that night? I mean, if you called, and then went to the beach house, you could not have met Tozere and he would have become suspicious right then and there. But he didn't become suspicious because he did meet his caller!"

Morgan swayed in his seat. "I—I—"

Shayne hammered on. "Why did you attack me at the San Marcos Motel the day you hired me? Or, better, why did you send Donald there to attack me?"

Morgan looked around him wildly now. "I wanted you—"

Shayne snapped at Donald. "It was you who slugged me, wasn't it? You were sent to get some forgotten evidence!"

Donald Maddern was sweating heavily. He wiped his face. But Shayne did not wait for an answer this time.

"No, Morgan, it could not have been you! You're a tall man. The killer of Tozere was short, the stab wound was low. The man who attacked me was small. You see, Morgan, the killer had to be a woman! The woman who had been keeping secret trysts with Tozere at the San Marcos Motel.

"That was why Tozere was so easy to kill. The killer of Roxie was one of Tozere's lovers. Roxie was killed by a woman who also loved Tozere and wanted him for herself. She only killed Tozere when it all went wrong."

Morgan was white as a sheet. The tall, silver-haired man stood up. His voice was little more than a whisper now.

"Damn you, Shayne! I tell you I killed—"

"No!" Shayne said. "But you know now who did, don't you, Morgan? You know who took that telephone call from Tozere! You know who Tozere's other woman was!"

Morgan sat down heavily, his eyes on the floor. Gentry was chewing fiercely on the stump of his cigar. Donald Maddern sweated in the hot night. Mike Shayne did not even look at Maddern when he spoke.

"Donald, who sent you to the San Marcos Motel to remove a matchbook and a ballpoint pen?"

Donald Maddern wiped his face. "Miss Alida. A matchbook from *Dino's* and a pen her father had given her from his office. I didn't mean to hit you. She told me it was just to keep Anne from knowing she was having an affair with Tozere. She said you would find it out and she was ashamed."

Alida Morgan suddenly laughed aloud. "All right, I was making love to Emil. So what? My sainted sister couldn't hold him. It was fun, going to that motel—a ball. But I didn't kill him or Roxie. Why would I? I didn't know that Van Allen tramp existed."

Shayne tugged on his earlobe. "No, Alida, I don't think you did know her, but you killed her. Or, to be precise, your hired man killed her. You see, Morgan, there had to be two people involved in the murder of Roxie. One to get Tozere away and hold him away, and one to do the actual killing. Of course, only the real killer, the one who planned it all, killed Tozere."

Angus Morgan looked up. "I killed them, Shayne. Let it go at that. I confess to it."

"All right, then you can tell me what Tozere was wearing that day,

the day he was killed!" Shayne snapped. "Go on, tell me!"

Angus Morgan hesitated. "Well —he wore his grey silk suit, his grey shoes, suede shoes. And, yes, one of those atrocious mongrammed shirts, white. A—a—grey and white striped tie. His—his wedding ring—his—"

"Wrist watch and the white carnation, Daddy!" Alida Morgan prompted.

Shayne's face was grim. "Yes, Miss Morgan, his white carnation," Shayne said. "I remember you told me that the day I was hired. A white carnation! A white carnation Tozere did not buy until after he left the house that morning after Roxie died. He bought his carnations from old Mary who sells in front of the Heverly Arms, a red carnation at night, a white carnation every morning. He was a dapper dresser. He undressed at the beach house, and there was a red carnation at the beach house! He bought the white one after he left your house. The only way you could have seen the white one was if you saw him later that day —and killed him!"

"Prove it!" Alida Morgan cried, her pretty face twisted in a sneer. "Prove any of it!"

"Will," Shayne said, "did you fingerprint that cabin at the San Marcos Motel?"

"We did, Mike. Plenty of prints. They're checking them now."

"It'll take work, but I think we'll find your prints, Alida," Shayne said.

The girl swore. "I was at *Dino's* all that night!"

"Yes, and that was unusual. You were being careful to be seen. I said there had to be two killers, and the actual killer could not have been from this house. He could not have known anyone in this case except you."

All the blood drained from Alida Morgan's face. The girl seemed to shrink and become smaller, her slim legs trembling in the tight blue jeans.

"You don't—know," Alida said, "you can't prove—"

"That was why the earring was torn out, Will." Shayne looked at Gentry as he spoke. "It was the hired killer's proof that he had done the job!"

"You can't prove it! You can't prove any of it!" Alida Morgan whispered.

"Marco Venuta was picked up two hours ago, Alida!" Shayne said harshly, quickly. "Wasn't he, Will?"

Gentry blinked, chewed on his cigar, and was about to answer when Alida leaped up.

"You're lying! Marco is in Mex—"

Alida stopped. Shayne faced Angus Morgan once more. The silver-haired man was looking at his youngest daughter. He seemed to have aged ten years.

"The call, Morgan. You saw

Alida talking, and you knew it was Tozere she was talking to!"

The old man's face was pleading. "Shayne—I—I—"

Now Shayne cried savagely, "Damn it, Morgan, don't you see it yet? Doesn't anyone see? She didn't want to kill Roxie Van Allen! She didn't know Roxie existed! It was planned to be an accident, and Roxie couldn't have such an accident! That was what went wrong, and what confused the whole case.

"She didn't want to kill Roxie. She wanted to kill the woman who stood between her and Tozere, the woman she hated, her own sister Anne Tozere!"

Angus Morgan gave a low, strangled moan and collapsed on the floor. Anne Tozere cried out in horror as she stared at her sister.

In that instant of confusion, Alida Morgan dashed from the room.

XIX

ALIDA MORGAN was out of the room before anyone could move. Then Shayne was after her. Rourke ran toward the single exit. Gentry and his men raced to the door. In the doorway they all collided, swearing. By the time they broke free Alida Morgan was gone from the house.

As they reached the front steps the white Jaguar was roaring away down the long driveway toward the road. Shayne raced for his car. Gentry was bawling orders to his men to bring the police car. Rourke was running after Shayne. In the distance there was a shrill screaming of brakes and tires as the Jaguar turned from the driveway onto the road.

An instant later there was a rending, tearing, sickening crash. And then there was silence.

By the time Shayne, Gentry and Rourke reached the road other cars had stopped and someone had pulled Alida Morgan from the wreck of the white Jaguar.

The young girl lay at the edge of the road, sat up against a tree. Her face was a mass of blood. Her left arm hung limp. She rocked back and forth with the pain. Her whole body seemed wracked with sobs. Shayne and Gentry bent over to help the girl. Then Shayne straightened up and pulled Gentry back. They stared at her.

Alida Morgan was not crying. She was cursing, swearing. A stream of hard, vile curse. On her young face was an expression of pure hate.

"The cheat, the liar! Big, strong man! You should have seen his face when the knife went in! The surprise when I stabbed him! You should have seen the strong man whimper! Liar! I didn't even know there was that other one! I didn't know! I thought he loved me! I wish it hadn't been that other one! Anne! I wish it had been Anne! Damn her, damn her, damn—"

Alida was still cursing Tozere and Anne and her father and Roxie Van Allen when Gentry's men climbed into the ambulance with her and drove away.

IT WAS NEARLY midnight in Chief Gentry's office when Mike Shayne and Tim Rourke sat there sipping the Chief's best bourbon. Gentry was feeling expansive, the case was all wrapped up.

"We'll pick up Marco Venuta, she says he's in Mexico," Gentry said. "Tozere's car is at the bottom of the bay, the boys are after it now. She told it all just as you figured, Mike. But you were lucky. Lying and guessing."

Shayne smiled. "Only one real lie, Will. Marco Venuta being picked up, but I knew he would be sooner or later. You found her prints in that motel room like I was sure you would."

"What tipped you, Mike?" Rourke said.

Shayne sighed as he drank his bourbon. "Two things bothered me all along. It had all the marks of an accident fake, and that earring just couldn't have been torn from her ear easily. Then, if it was a frame, it was lousy. It had all the marks of a last minute, desperate cover up for murder. But with Roxie's fear of water it was a stupid murder. Too stupid for the rest of the set-up. When Mrs. Warren said she had seen Anne with Emil Tozere, and Tim was sure Anne couldn't have been at the beach house, I saw it. I realized how much Anne and Roxie looked alike. Not enough for anyone who knew them, but more than enough for a hired killer!

"If Anne was the real victim, it all fell into place. The earring torn out as a proof of having done the job. The bathing suit that was not Roxie's but Anne's. The whole accident—Anne was a strong swimmer, often visited the beach house, even liked to swim alone. The fact that the killer didn't know Roxie became logical. When I realized that Anne was supposed to be at the beach house, and that Alida did not know she had gone to Palm Beach or New York, and that the unknown woman was probably Alida, I had it all solved."

Gentry shook his head wonderingly. The gruff Chief poured another shot of the good bourbon. Gentry looked at Rourke and shrugged wearily.

"He did it again," Gentry said. "The girl told it just that way. She wanted Tozere, she hired Marco Venuta to kill Anne. When she got the earring she knew it had gone wrong. She blurted it out to Marco, got angry as hell, and Marco ran far and fast. She did not even know who she had gotten killed. That earring was a shocker. She was too afraid to throw it away.

"Then when Tozere called and blackmailed her, she knew the

truth. Now she hated Tozere for having Roxie, and she had to get out of the blackmail. She took out twenty-five thousand from the bank. We've checked that. She went and killed Tozere. Framing Manny Corbett was Tozere's idea, just as Mike said. The rest you know."

Shayne stood up, stretched. "Framing Corbett was a desperate last minute idea. The murder was done, any frame would help. It almost worked, too. If Corbett had really had no alibi, even I might have stopped looking after we found Tozere. For an after-the-fact frame-up it was almost good enough."

"She's insane, of course," Rourke said.

"That's what Morgan will try to prove," Gentry said. "With his money he might do it."

"I almost hope you never find Marco Venuta," Shayne said. "He'll burn and she'll get off with an insane asylum."

"But she is insane, Mike," Rourke said. "Venuta was just an arrogant punk, a man who killed for money and for Alida. He killed to be a big man. He deserves what he gets."

Shayne nodded slowly. But he did not feel good about any of it. He thought of Corbett. The little hoodlum had really loved Roxie Van Allen, and she was dead by a cruel quirk of fate, a mistake. Corbett's friends would not let him off easy. Angus Morgan was a broken man. Only Anne Tozere had come out better, she had Paul Hening, if that was enough for the loss of a sister, the knowledge that her sister had wanted her dead.

"One thing, Mike," Rourke said. "Why did they hire you? Alida says it was her idea."

"It was. I should have guessed that. Morgan said his daughter had pointed out that clipping, but Anne had to be told. That was what I missed right at the start. It was Alida, not Anne, who wanted me hired. You see, she was too smart. She knew they would all be involved as soon as Tozere was found. She thought it would look suspicious if they had not been worried that he was missing. She wanted him found. She was sure it would finish off Corbett for good."

"Quite a mistake, Mike," Rourke said.

"The whole thing was a mistake, Tim. Even the motive. All for love, and Emil Tozere didn't love her at all!"

Gentry poured another bourbon all around. The gruff Chief now leaned back and lighted his cigar. Shayne and Rourke smiled. When Gentry lighted the cigar, the case was over.

(Continued from other side)

Get 11 Great Mysteries

...including 9 ERLE STANLEY GARDNER Hits!

[worth $37.95 in publishers' editions] FOR ONLY $1.00

The Case of the Amorous Aunt
The Case of the DARING DIVORCEE
Fish Or Cut Bait
The Case of the PHANTOM FORTUNE
The Case of the HORRIFIED HEIRS
UP FOR GRABS
CUT THIN TO WIN

IT's more exciting than ever – when you can get *eleven* great thrillers like these, packed with suspense-filled mystery and pulse-pounding excitement – *for only $1.00!* Now you can get five Perry Mason masterpieces – and *four more* Erle Stanley Gardner stories, written under Gardner's pen name of "A. A. Fair"! PLUS 2 MORE brand-new mystery-thrillers! These eleven great mysteries would cost $37.95 in the publishers' original editions – but YOU get them ALL for $1.00 as your introduction to the many advantages of membership in The Detective Book Club.

The Best NEW Mysteries – For LESS than 97¢ each!

Out of the 300 or more new detective books that come out every year, the Club selects the very "cream of the crop" – by outstanding authors like Erle Stanley Gardner, Agatha Christie, A. A. Fair, Mignon G. Eberhart, John Creasey and Van Wyck Mason. ALL THESE and many other famous authors have had their books selected by the Club. Many are members themselves!

Club selections are ALL newly published books. As a member, you get THREE of them complete in one handsomely bound Triple Volume (a $10.50 to $11.85 value in publishers' editions) for ONLY $2.89.

Take ONLY The Books You Want

You do NOT have to take a volume every month. You receive a free copy of the Club's "Preview" which will fully describe all coming selections and you may reject any volume before or after receiving it. NO money in advance; NO membership fee. You may cancel membership any time.

SEND NO MONEY

Mail Postcard for ALL 5 Volumes

Simply mail postcard promptly and we will send you at once the NINE complete Erle Stanley Gardner stories–PLUS TWO MORE exciting mysteries – all described on the other side. But don't delay. Mail postcard NOW to:

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB
Roslyn, L. I., New York 11576

MAIL THIS POSTCARD NOW FOR YOUR ELEVEN MYSTERIES

•

NO POSTAGE NEEDED

SEND NO MONEY – JUST MAIL THIS POSTCARD 93-275

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB GA
Roslyn, L.I., New York 11576

Please enroll me as a member and send me at once the FOUR double-length, hard-bound editions of Perry Mason & A. A. Fair thrillers, PLUS the brand-new 3-in-1 volume Club selection containing another Perry Mason and 2 other great mysteries. I enclose NO MONEY IN ADVANCE; within a week after receiving my books, I will either return them all and owe nothing, or keep ALL FIVE volumes, containing ELEVEN first-rate mystery stories, for the special new-member introductory price of ONLY $1.00 (plus a few cents mailing charge).

As a member, I am to receive advance descriptions of all future selections, but am not obligated to buy any. For each future Triple-Volume I decide to keep, I will send you only $2.89 (plus a few cents mailing charges). I may reject any volume before or after I receive it, and I may cancel my membership at any time. *(Books shipped in U.S.A. only.)*

Mr.
Mrs.
Miss } .....

PLEASE PRINT PLAINLY

Address.....

City.....State.....

ZIP CODE ZONE NO.

MYSTERY READERS! Get These 11 Thrillers FOR ONLY $1.00

THESE 9 BY Erle Stanley GARDNER
World's No. 1 Mystery Writer

PLUS

5	PERRY MASON Bafflers	$17.50 in publ. editions
4	A. A. FAIR Mysteries	$13.45 in publ. editions
2	MORE Exciting Thrillers	$7.00 in publ. editions

(A $37.95 VALUE)

Yes! Get ALL 11 for only $1.00 AS A NEW MEMBER

The Case of the Amorous Aunt
$6.45 in publ. editions
The Case of the DARING DIVORCEE
$7.00 in publ. editions
Fish Or Cut Bait
The Case of the PHANTOM FORTUNE
$7.00 in publ. editions
The Case of the HORRIFIED HEIRS
UP FOR GRABS
CUT THIN TO WIN

You Get 8 GARDNER-FAIR Hits!

in 4 Double-Length, Hard-Bound, 2-in-1 Volumes

1. **Gardner's Case of the HORRIFIED HEIRS**
Perry's client only met Mrs. Trent once. But — SOMEONE WANTS TO MURDER THEM *BOTH!*

2. **Fair's CUT THIN TO WIN**
Donald Lam gave the woman $10,000 for her "accident" . . . that now looks like an ALIBI FOR MURDER!

3. **Gardner's Case of the PHANTOM FORTUNE**
Perry is forced to defend *himself* against a charge of *framing an attempted MURDER!*

4. **Fair's UP FOR GRABS**
Nurse Doon is *frightened* . . . because *she* KNOWS the patient who left was DEAD!

5. **Gardner's Case of the DARING DIVORCEE**
A suspected *murder* weapon *disappears* — and the D.A. threatens *Perry with San Quentin!*

6. **Fair's FISH OR CUT BAIT**
WHO'S DRUGGED BERTHA COOL? *Not* the woman who made all those threats. SHE'S being *murdered!*

7. **Gardner's Case of the AMOROUS AUNT**
Lorraine Elmore *swears* she's innocent. But SHE has a motive; and ONLY SHE was a witness!

8. **Fair's TRY ANYTHING ONCE**
Donald Lam CAN'T RESIST $2,000 — for spending *just one night* in a MOTEL!

PLUS

THE LATEST *Perry Mason* AND 2 MORE mysteries in this 3-in-1 Volume

$10.50 in publ. editions

9. **Gardner's Case of the TROUBLED TRUSTEE**
Perry's client had the chance, and the gun, to KILL! Pretty soon he'll have THE CHAIR! . . . *unless* . . .

10. **THE GENTLE ASSASSIN** *by Clay Richards*
Kim Locke "plays" a desperate game — while a vicious KILLER waits to *pounce* on him!

11. **THE MALABANG PEARL** *by Frank Archer*
Something he *doesn't know about* leads Morland into a *HORRIBLE nightmare of VIOLENCE!*

(See Other Side)

Postage Will be Paid by Addressee

No Postage Stamp Necessary If Mailed in the United States

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
First Class Permit No. 47 — Roslyn, N. Y.

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB
Roslyn, L. I.
New York 11576